

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 14th September 2016 at Beeson House, Lintot Square, Southwater commencing at 7.30 pm.

- Chairman:** Mr G. Cole
- Councillors:** Mr K. Diamond Mrs P. Flores-Moore
Mr M. Neale Mrs C. Vickers
Mr G. Watkins Mr N. Whitear
- County:** Apologies provided by Cllr B. Watson OBE
- District:** Apologies provided by Councillor Dr J. Chidlow
- Clerk:** Mrs J. Nagy
- Also Present:** Mr S. Brew, Leisure Centre Manager
Mr T. Kidd, Asst. Leisure Centre Manager
- Press:** Not present
- Public:** None

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Mr Cole said that with regret he had to report the passing of Ian Howard, who had served the community of Southwater for many years as a district councillor. His contribution will be sadly missed. Mr Howard's funeral is due to take place tomorrow, and a contribution from the Parish Council will be read during the service.

FG57/09/16 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting, then highlighted the housekeeping rules and indicated that should anyone wish to film/record the proceedings could they make themselves known.

The Deputy Clerk advised that the meeting was being recorded.

Mr Diamond said that the new roundabout at the junction of Cedar Drive was a great improvement.

Mr Watkins asked the Deputy Clerk to make an FOI request to WSCC for details of the recent consultation in relation to changes in opening times at Waste Recycling sites. She said that she had reported the results to Council, but would put in the FOI as requested.

Mr Diamond said that the consultation period of two months was not sufficient in his opinion. Mr Watkins would like to know how payments would be made at the sites.

Mrs Vickers arrived at 7.35pm

Mr Whitear agreed that the new roundabout was an improvement. He had seen on the Keep Southwater Green Facebook page that there was evidence of mud on the road, and asked the Deputy Clerk to check with Berkeleys that there was a wheel-washer on site. Mrs Flores-Moore said that she had not seen evidence of one.

The Deputy Clerk will enquire of Berkeleys.

Mr Watkins said the issues with the temporary lights had been reported at the recent meeting with Berkeleys and they had not thought that there was any problem with the lights.

Mr Diamond suggested that a Litter Warden be sent to take before and after photos of mud on the road; however, the Deputy Clerk said unfortunately that this was not practical.

Mrs Flores-Moore that twice she had recently had to assist articulated lorries who had come along Blakes Farm by mistake and could not navigate the pinch points; on once occasion it had taken her an hour to help one lorry.

The Deputy Clerk will ask Highways for signage to warn heavy goods vehicles to be mounted on the Southwater St bridge supports in Blakes Farm Rd.

Mr Whitear reported that a resident is parking on the corner at Bonfire Hill, making it dangerous when driving around the bend. Mr Diamond asked the Deputy Clerk to report this to the Operation Crackdown website. She suggested that as the resident is elderly and known to the Council, that she ask PCSO Cecil to visit and offer advice; however, this was not thought to be the best approach.

The Deputy Clerk will report the inconsiderate and dangerous parking on the Bonfire Hill bend to Operation Crackdown.

Mrs Vickers advised that she would be speaking on behalf of the Parish Council at District Councillor Ian Howard's funeral tomorrow.

Members thanked Mrs Vickers for agreeing to be the Council representative.

Standing Orders were not raised, there being no members of the public present.

FG58//09/16 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Apted.

Members noted these apologies.

FG59/09/16 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The Deputy Clerk referred Members of Council to information issued in relation to the Member's Code of Conduct and Standing Orders. This information contained a flow chart previously issued which should assist Members in reaching their decision; this not being overly complicated.

Mrs Flores-Moore and Mr Neale declared a personal and prejudicial interest in FG62/09/16 relating to the review of grants, as both were involved with organisations which were under consideration.

FG60/09/16 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr Cole advised that following the resignation from the Council of Mr Peter Buckley, the election of Chairman of the Council and Chairman of this Committee would be decided at the Full Council meeting on 28th September 2016.

FG61/09/16 CORRESPONDENCE

The Deputy Clerk referred members to general correspondence received and asked whether Members wished to comment on any particular item.

West Sussex Mediation Service

The Mediation Service has sent an invitation previously circulated by email to the Annual General Meeting on Thursday, 29th September at 6pm at Park House, North St.

No councillor expressed a desire to attend.

West Sussex Association of Local Councils

The West Sussex ALC has sent an invitation previously circulated by email to the Annual General Meeting and conference on Monday, 17th October 2016 at 10am at The Lodge Hill Centre in Pulborough.

No councillor expressed a desire to attend.

WSCC Flood Action Group

The Clerk previously circulated via email a press release from the County Council advising how to set up a local flood action group

Members noted the correspondence

Mrs Flores-Moore asked why she had received hard copy of the Minutes of the North Horsham County Local Committee as no mention of Southwater was made. The Deputy Clerk advised that this would be for information only.

FG62/09/16 MINUTES

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th July 2016 be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting. The Confidential Minutes were not approved, these to be considered at September Full Council on 28th September 2016.

Mr Diamond asked if the Mrs Tobin was legally able to clerk the Full Council meeting. The Deputy Clerk advised that having sought advice, Mrs Tobin was able to do so.

Members NOTED and APPROVED the information provided in that this was a true and correct position of the Council's financial affairs as at 14th September 2016

Annual Return

The Deputy Clerk was delighted to report that the Annual Return has been returned from the External Auditors PFK Littlejohn with no notifications i.e. that all is correct. The Deputy Clerk has thanked Mr Peter Buckley for his help in completing the Return.

Members also thanked the Deputy Clerk and the whole office team for their efforts in producing the Annual Return.

Gym Tenders

Mr Cole announced that due to the nature of the matter to be discussed, the public and press would be excluded for the next item. There were no members of the public or press present.

The next item is minuted under CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE. Recording of the meeting was suspended.

The confidential session was completed; however, there were no members of the public or press present to return to the meeting. Recording of the meeting recommenced.

Bank Balances

It can be seen from the Financial Pack that the bank balances are very low, so the agreed transfer of £25,000 back into the Virgin account has not taken place. In fact, a transfer of £30,000 out of the Virgin account must now be authorised to cover September salaries and September Full Council payments. The second tranche of the precept is due, but this will not be until the last day of September.

It was RESOLVED to agree the transfer of £30,000 out of the Virgin Account into general funds, with immediate effect, with Mr Apted and Mrs Flores-Moore signing the paperwork.

Bank Signatories

Following the resignation of Mr Peter Buckley from the Council, the bank signatories have had to be reviewed.

Currently the Co-Operative Bank and the Lloyds Deposit account have five signatories: Councillors Apted, Cole, Diamond, Flores-Moore and Varley. Mr Buckley was a signatory but there is no minimum requirement.

It was agreed to remain with five signatories, and to monitor whether a sixth is required.

The Virgin Account as three signatories which are currently Mr Apted, Mr Buckley and Mrs Flores-Moore, so Mr Cole has been approached to be the third signatory.

All paperwork has been signed, but the Committee must formally authorise the change.

It was RESOLVED that Mr Cole would replace Mr Buckley as signatory for the Virgin Account.

Review of grants

The Deputy Clerk referred to her report detailing customers that have a free element of hall hire in order that the Committee can review this.

After discussion, it was agreed that the situation in relation to all hires would remain the same, with those organisations which did not pay for services/hall hires provided being asked to apply for a grant to cover this. The Deputy Clerk is to ensure that all organisations have completed the correct agreements.

Out of hours security alarm call outs

If the security alarm is activated out of hours, the alarm company automatically calls agreed members of staff to attend. Such staff are paid £25 for each call out. However, Mr Gillespie has indicated that he no longer want to be on the list. Female staff members are now reluctant to come out during the night; the Deputy Clerk reported that she had a minor confrontation with a delivery driver at 4am, when he was banging on the office windows whilst she was on the phone to the alarm company.

Such call outs can average 3 per month. If the cause can be attributed to a tenant, such as leaving a window open, which moves blinds thereby triggering motion sensors, then the £25 cost of the call out is re-charged. However, the majority of call outs relate to a “blip” in the phone line, which triggers the notification system.

The solution would appear to be to employ a contractor to attend such call outs. The Deputy Clerk approached the Housing Association in the Lintot Square to ascertain which company the use, and this is Herts Electrical Contractors, who have quoted an annual contract cost of £1500 per year to service Beeson House, Easteds Barn and the Leisure Centre, plus an additional charge of £145 per call out. Attendance is guaranteed within 3 hours and is usually within one to two hours.

Should the Committee agree in principal to the suggestion, the Deputy Clerk can seek other quotations which may prove cheaper.

It was AGREED that female staff should not be required to attend such call outs; the Deputy Clerk will try to obtain other quotations for the cost of servicing call outs and report to Full Council.

Removal of contracts element from Scuba

The Bookings Clerk currently has to enter all contract or repeat bookings twice, once on the RBS system which generates the invoices, and once on the Scuba system, so has an impact upon her workload.

In discussions with the Clerk, Mr Buckley (who was a councillor at the time) Mr Cole, Mrs Flores-Moore and the Leisure Centre Manager, it was agreed to remove this from the

Scuba system at a cost saving of around £300.

Members noted this information.

Replacement Flag Pole

The flag pole is in a poor state of repair, which makes it difficult to raise and lower the flag. It is safe in the terms that it will not fall over.

A replacement cost was investigated recently when an additional pole was considered; this being in the region of £1000. As the Council has cash flow issues at the moment, the Deputy Clerk suggested that the replacement be deferred, and the pole monitored in the interim.

Members noted that a replacement pole will be needed in the future, and to bear this in mind when considering budgetary requirements.

Renewal of Disclosure Barring Service Checks

All staff regularly under go such checks formally called DBS checks every two years. The cost of this is £72 each, so with around 25 staff this will cost £1800. Whilst the Council does have a duty of care towards the public, few staff are in unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults. The Deputy Clerk suggested that only staff members who are in such contact are checked, these being Leisure Centre staff, except for the cleaner, and all Litter Wardens.

It was RESOLVED that only Leisure Centre Staff, including Friday Night Youth Club staff and Litter Wardens would be DBS checked. Cleaners would not be checked, and would be reminded of their job descriptions to ensure that they would not be in contact with vulnerable people.

Easteds Barn Grounds Maintenance

It was previously agreed that quotes would be sought to tidy up the grounds of Easteds Barn as this work was too much for the Council's own team to tackle. This is quoted as a one off tidy up and/or a monthly visit.

	Initial Cost	Monthly Cost
Countrywide	510	80
TEM	450	70
Max Ferretti	700	275

It was RESOLVED to employ TEM to carry out an initial tidy up of Easteds Barn grounds, and then to monitor the situation to see if further work is required.

Hazel Close Tree Works

Works are required to the rear of property in Hazel Close as a result of an insurance claim. Despite the best efforts of Council staff, only one quote has been obtained, this being for £360 + VAT. Due to the delay, the Deputy Clerk advised that the Council accept this not unreasonable quotation, as the householder was becoming understandably impatient.

It was RESOLVED to accept this single quotation so as not to delay matters further, this being an insurance claim against the Council.

Ring Fenced Sums

Mrs Flores-Moore referred to the Skate Park Ring Fenced Account which was some £14,000 in arrears. The Deputy Clerk advised that S106 monies were available and she was applying for same; however the District Council was refusing to allow for some costs which it had previously allowed, so discussions were currently taking place to resolve this.

Mr Cole said that the Skate Park is in reasonable condition at the moment.

Mr Watkins said that it was agreed that as long as there were funds available, the Skate Park would remain open. Mr Diamond agreed, saying that in previous discussions, the Committee was reluctant to take down the Skate Park until the new one is built. Mr Watkins pointed out that there was a cost of several thousand pounds to remove the Skate Park.

It was agreed that the Deputy Clerk would monitor the financial situation of the Skate Park, and try to resolve issues with S106 payments as a priority.

FG64/09/16 PAYMENT SCHEDULE

The Deputy Clerk presented a payment schedules to 14th September 2016 for approval in the sum of £70,320.05

Mrs Flores-Moore noted that the Responders were on the debtors list, and that she would arrange payment as soon as possible.

Mr Whitear noted that the De Lage Landen payment appeared twice on the payments list; the Deputy Clerk advised that the schedule included payments made during the August recess for ratification, so the two lease payments were for August and September.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the payment schedules dated 14th September 2016 be APPROVED in the sum of £70,320.05.

FG65/09/16 GRANTS

St Catherine's Hospice

St Catherine's have applied for a grant of £200 to assist with the provision of end of life care to patients at home.

It was RESOLVED to give a grant to St Catherine's of £200 as requested, and to offer them a free stall at the Christmas Festival on December 3rd.

The Deputy Clerk is to ascertain whether it was possible to split the Youth Project grant from general grants in the accounts to make monies available clearer.

The Deputy Clerk reported that the latest figures available from Sussex Police website was in July 2016, when 39 crimes –the same as June, May and April 2016 - were reported in Southwater, these being:

July 2016

Anti Social behaviour	8
Bike Theft	2
Burglary	1
Criminal Damage & Arson	12
Drugs	0
Other Crime	1
Other Theft	3
Weapon Possession	0
Public Order Offence	1
Robbery	0
Shoplifting	4
Theft from a person	2
Vehicle crime	1
Violence & Sexual Offences	4

In June 2016 the figures were as follows :-

Anti Social behaviour	9
Bike Theft	1
Burglary	2
Criminal Damage & Arson	4
Drugs	0
Other Crime	0
Other Theft	4
Weapon Possession	1
Public Order Offence	4
Robbery	0
Shoplifting	2
Theft from a person	0
Vehicle crime	1
Violence & Sexual Offences	11

Members noted this information.

Consideration of issuing licences to manage land

Two households, 9 Poppy Close, and 7, Eversfield had asked that licences be considered to allow them to manage areas of Council owned land. This matter was discussed at last week's Planning Committee meeting and it was resolved that licences to manage land would NOT be granted, due to issues relating to what would or not be permitted. The Council will continue to pursue community projects which would improve the Poppy Close play area

It was RESOLVED to refuse to issue licences to manage Council land as control over such land should be retained.

Latest information on Tree Management

Quaife Woodland has supplied some sample specifications of tree management schemes which have been passed to Mr Watkins and Mr Cole for comments. However, there is no indication of cost, which would be a factor in considering whether or not to proceed with a full tender.

The District Council has advised in the past that if tree roots from a TPO tree impact on a property's foundations it can be liable, so has permitted felling. A recent court case has reinforced this view, as a Council elsewhere in the county has been fined £25000 for failing to deal with a similar issue, even though the conservatory in question was proved to have been so badly built that it would have fallen down anyway.

Members noted this information

Review of Locking of Gates at Leisure Centre Fairbank Rd car park

The summer over night closure of the barrier to the Fairbank Rd car park ceased on 5th September. Since the re-opening the Deputy Clerk has received correspondence from two members of the public, one in The Forge and one in Pevensey Rd saying that there was a marked reduction in anti-social behaviour during the closure, and that they would support this being permanent.

The Council's Litter Warden has also reported that litter has increased substantially last week and this, when the car park has been re-opened.

The Planning Committee agreed that it would support a permanent closure of the car park between the hours of 8pm and 8am, with a suggestion that this be reviewed every six months.

Mr Cole said that he had noted an increase in rubbish in the stream since the car park had re-opened.

The Deputy Clerk suggested that should the Committee be minded to agree to the permanent overnight closure of the car park, then this should be from a date in the future, to allow for sufficient notice to be given.

It was RESOLVED that the overflow Leisure Centre car park, to the rear of Beeson House, would be closed overnight 8pm to 8am on weekdays, 6pm to 9pm weekends

on a permanent basis, as from Monday, 3rd October; this to be reviewed every six months. The cost of permanent signage will be explored.

Final Approval of the Woodland Walk Project

The Deputy Clerk referred to her report on proposed expenditure for the Woodland Walk which is to be funded by a Tesco grant already received.

Members noted and agreed the expenditure.

Update of Insurance Claim against the Council

The claim against the Council has been settled out of court, all costs being covered by insurance. The Council's insurance policy was recently renewed for a further three year period, so it is not known what impact the case will have on future premiums.

Members noted this information.

Mr Cole announced that due to the nature of the matter to be discussed, the public and press would be excluded for the next item. There were no members of the public or press present.

The next item is minuted under CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE.

The confidential session was completed; however, there were no members of the public or press present to return to the meeting. Recording of the meeting recommenced.

FG68/09/16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Finance & General Purposes meeting will be Wednesday, 12th October 2016, this being the week after the Planning Committee.

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm.