

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 16th November, 2016 at Beeson House, Lintot Square, Southwater commencing at 7.30 pm.

Chairman: Cllr M.Neale

Councillors: Cllr L.Apted Cllr G.Cole
Cllr P. Flores-Moore Cllr J.Hutchings
Cllr G. Watkins Cllr N. Whitear

County: Apologies provided by Cllr B. Watson OBE

District: Apologies provided by Cllr Dr J. Chidlow

Clerk: Mrs.C.Tobin

Press: Not present

Public: None

FG86/11/16 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 if they had not already done so to the Clerk.

The Chairman advised that the meeting was being recorded.

The Chairman, Cllr Neale indicated that whilst he appreciated that in the past members and public had used this section of the meeting to express concerns, the primary reason for the item on the agenda is to note items made by the public for reporting to the relevant body, discussion on the items raised should be for clarification. No decisions can be made on these items raised at the meeting as they have not been specified in the agenda. If the item raised by the public requires a decision by Members then it will be raised on the following appropriate meeting agenda.

As Councillors, Members have the ability to report any matter of concern to the Clerk's office and the office will then make the necessary enquiries reporting back to the Member concerned if required. If however, Members wished to put an item on a future agenda, the rule of thumb would be to ask the Clerk in writing eight days prior to the agenda being issued; this being in line with Standing Orders. The Clerk indicated to members that normally she would be preparing an agenda the week before a meeting took place so there was an opportunity if something urgent were to come up for discussions to put this item on the agenda at that point, but this should be with the agreement of the relevant Chairman. The Agenda for a meeting must be issued three clear days before the proposed meeting. The Clerk then gave a number of scenarios where issues had been brought up by members and these had been resolved prior to the next meeting.

Cllr Whitear said that he was all for shorter meetings, and had felt for sometime that much of what was reported was unnecessary for a meeting and could have been directed through the Clerk's office. Cllr Vickers indicated that what was being proposed was in line with the District Council's procedures for the effective management of meetings.

Cllr Watkins stated that perhaps if a Members wished to bring up a matter urgently and they had missed the agenda then a Member should contact the relevant Chairman and the Clerk to advise that they wished the Chairman to address the issue under Chairman's announcements.

FG87/11/16 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr. K.Diamond.

Members noted these apologies.

FG88/11/16 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The 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.

FG89/11/16 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements. Cllr Flores-Moore asked whether she could highlight an issues at the local doctors surgery at this point having missed the public participation section. She was very concerned to hear that the local doctors surgery had waiting lists to see patients stretching to two weeks, and had heard of two incidents involving young children whose parents had been unable to get an appointment and whom had ended up in hospital due to their condition. Cllrs Vickers said that the District Council were discussing issues with the Clinical Commissioning Group and Southwater Surgery was being discussed in that it could take further patients; the problem being that of acquiring doctors. The Clerk reminded Members that the surgery had been built to accommodate six doctors. The Clerk suggested that she write to the CCG in relation to these concerns.

The Clerk to write to the Clinical Commissioning Group in relation to the concerns raised over waiting times at the local Southwater Surgery and the lack of provision in terms of GP's.

FG90/11/16 CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk referred to the correspondence list. Members were pleased with the new system of producing a list of correspondence received and thought that the system would work well. Members did not wish to discuss any of the items at the meeting.

FG91/11/16 MINUTES

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12th October, 2016 be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting.

FG92/11/16 ACCOUNTS & FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Deputy Clerk presented to Members the financial pack produced for the meeting, detailing income and expenditure, cash and investment analysis and debtors to 16th November 2016.

Members NOTED and APPROVED the information provided in that this was a true and correct position of the Council's financial affairs as at 16th November 2016.

Internal Audit

The Chairman indicated that the internal auditors had visited the Council, and whilst there were a couple of minor items noted including a deficit in the petty cash of £9.62; there were no significant areas of concern noted.

The internal auditors will be sending a report and this will be sent to all councillors.

The Council therefore need to write-off the petty cash difference of £9.62.

The Chairman indicated that there were a number of procedural issues to be addressed and he knew that the Clerk was looking to review all policies. The Clerk stated that the Locum Deputy Clerk would be looking at all the Council's policies going forward.

It was RESOLVED by all present, that the Council would write off the Petty Cash difference and NOTED the comments.

Computer Tablets

The Clerk referred to the report produced for the purchase of five tablets, initially to be given to the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Council/Committees. Cllr Whitear suggested that perhaps the Committee should look at leasing of such equipment. A short discussion ensued where it was agreed that the Chairman of Committee and the Clerk should take forward this suggestion, and look at the advantages or disadvantages, furthermore Members delegated the decision on whether to purchase or lease to Chair and Clerk. Councillors were reminded that the original cost for all 15 tablets had been budgeted for in 2016/17 but this initial purchase was a trial. Cllr Cole stated that it was imperative that the Council tried to reduce the paper costs and it was hoped that this would reduce down the stationery costs in the longer term. The Clerk stated that the Locum Deputy Clerk would be looking at a new system so that all correspondence could be scanned reducing the need for paper copies and filing.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Council would purchase or lease five tablets. The cost of which would be set against the Neighbourhood Plan budget initially. The Chairman and Clerk were delegated the decision as to whether the

Council should purchase or lease the equipment.

Additional Dog Waste Bin

The Clerk referred to the report produced in relation to the additional dog waste bin. The Clerk stated that this matter had been brought to the Council's attention previously, and had thought that an offer had been received from the RSPCA to assist with the purchase. Members after a short discussion asked the Clerk to enquire of the RSPCA as to whether they would pay for the new dog bin if this were to be supplied.

It was RESOLVED that subject to the District Council's survey that the Council ask the RSPCA to pay towards the cost of this additional bin with the Council paying the emptying costs.

FG93/11/16 PAYMENT SCHEDULE

The Clerk presented a payment schedule to 16th November 2016 for approval amounting to £57,086.61.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the payment schedules dated 16th November 2016 amounting to £57,086.61 should be APPROVED.

FG94/11/16 SOUTHWATER YOUTH PROJECT

The Chairman referred to the report in relation to the current position regarding the funding and management of the Youth Project. Representatives from the Parish Council require a lead from the Committee as to how to progress matters. Furthermore discussion is required in relation to the funding of the project; the budgeted figure in the Parish Council accounts being £15k, with the Youth Project having issued an invoice for a grant of £17k. Cllr Cole indicated that he did not appear to have Page 2 of the report, the Clerk apologised for this fact and duly read the contents of Page 2 during the meeting.

Cllr Vickers stated that whilst she fully supported the Youth Project, she for one could not consider a grant of this magnitude, unless the full financial information for the Project was made available along with the numbers of young people attending the Project.

Cllr Flores-Moore stated that she was concerned having received the proposed budget that in 17/18 this showed a deficit; she was also unhappy with figures provided and had the Clerk to look at these. The Clerk stated she would discuss with the Member the following Monday. The Clerk was asked about any Agreement or Constitutional documents in place; the Clerk responded that for a number of years there had been a proposal for the Youth Project to register as a charity and various options had been looked at but to date not pursued. The Clerk believed that there had been an Agreement some ten years previously but this was part of a missing file. A new Agreement should be agreed identifying formally what the Parish Council would provide in terms of funding and support and what the role of the Youth Project and Management Board were.

The Clerk advised that during the last three years the parish representation had been periodical due to the various changes in parish council representatives. However, there did not appear to be minutes of all meetings and the norm would be four meetings per year,

with one Annual General Meeting.

Members following a discussion felt that the Clerk should withhold the payment of £17k at this point to allow the new parish representatives to discuss the Committee's concerns with the Management Board at a forthcoming meeting, these being lack of Agreement between the Parish Council and the Youth Project, Constitution for the Youth Project (charitable or otherwise), Financial Information (budgets/income and expenditure 2015/16, 2016/17 year to date and budget forecast for 2017/18 together with a breakdown of the numbers attending the club.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Clerk should withhold payment of the grant for £17k until there was full clarification as to the administration of the Youth Project, financial information and numbers attending the club on a weekly basis. The Council representatives to the management board should discuss at the forthcoming meeting the concerns of the parish council as highlighted, reporting back to Council in December 2017.

FG95/11/16 COUNCIL PREMISES & LAND**

Church Lane, Southwater

The Clerk informed Members that the following documents had been received following the successful completion of the lease to Little Barn Owls; Statutory Declaration, Licence to Underlet and Sub-Lease.

Members NOTED that the document had been received.

Southwater Leisure Centre – Evening Closure Signage

The Clerk indicated that there had been concerns expressed by local residents that the signage to the lower car park were not visible and had caused them to be locked out of the car park. In order to avoid such instances in future, the Clerk had obtained quotations from BEL Signs for larger A4 signs the cost of which would be £173.

It was APPROVED by all present that the Council should purchase larger signage for the lower car park to ensure that the signs are visible to the public. The budget to be used in this instance would be the Ring-fenced Signage cost centre.

Council Tree Stock

The Clerk referred to her report on the current position and enquiries made in relation to a Tree Management Programme.

It was APPROVED by all present that the Clerk should proceed with the quotation received from Quaife Woodlands in order to produce a Tree Management Plan for the Council's tree stocks.

Tree Matters – General

The Clerk referred to previous correspondence going back to February, with the Council having instructed the Deputy Clerk to obtain a quotation so that the Council could consider whether or not to pay for the trees behind Mapledown in Pond Farm Ghyll North.

The Deputy Clerk had referred to the Tree Officer at Horsham District Council, however having read the correspondence, this did not indicate that the trees were dangerous merely that they were tall not necessarily that the Council carry out the works. To do this contrary to the existing policy in place would set a precedent for other works within the confines of the village. The Council existing policy is in line with that operated by the District Council. Cllr Cole stated that if the trees were causing damage to property or fencing then he presumed that this would be looked at on a case by case basis. The Clerk stated that all tree issues were investigated.

The Clerk would advise that as these trees are not deemed dangerous that should the property owner still wish to have these cut down to enable light in her garden that the Council could give her permission with the usual caveats in place to take down the four trees. However the Council should not itself pay for such works, however, the Clerk would recommend that these trees be identified in relation to the next tree survey to ensure that these are then recorded and if necessary at that time a report would indicate the status of the trees.

It was AGREED by all present that in relation to the four trees discussed in Pond Farm Ghyll North that no works would be undertaken by the Council as these trees were not causing damage to property nor considered a danger. The Council would approve the resident carrying out works, subject to all criteria for doings so being met; this to be at the resident's cost should they wish to proceed.

Eversfield

The Clerk advised Members that quotations had been received in relation to the trees causing damage to boundary fencing in this area, and recommended that the Council carry out the necessary works to avoid future claims. Cllr Watkins asked why it was necessary to carry this work; the Clerk responded that the small trees in questions were causing damage to fences and therefore the Council could be liable. Photographic evidence again had been received along with a request from the landowner a housing association.

Cllr Watkins declared an interest in that he had used the services of George Potbury and Cllr Flores Moore declared an interest in relation to Max Ferretti and did not take part in the vote.

George Potbury £450.00, Max Ferretti £575.00 and Countrywide £720.00.

It was AGREED by all with the exception of Cllrs Flores-Moore and Watkins, that the Council should carry out the tree works required in Eversfield to prevent damage to neighbouring boundary fencing being caused by trees on Council owned land, the appointed contractor being George Potbury £450.

FG96/11/16 POPPY CLOSE PLAY AREA

The Clerk reported that Cllr Flores-Moore had asked for this matter to be put on the agenda. Cllr Flores-Moore stated that her understanding was that this area not being ideal for a play area, asked whether that the Council may wish to work on a project and seek funding to turn this into a memorial garden in remembrance of Cllr Ian Howard.

Cllr Flores-Moore stated that at present the area was unused although the old play equipment and surfacing were still in situ and would have to be removed. Cllr Vickers said that she would support any such memorial in remembrance of Ian Howard.

It was reported by Cllr Flores-Moore that the signage and chain to the play area had been removed this having been locked for safety reasons.

The Clerk suggested after a short conversation that perhaps a better location would be the small green space on the Worthing Road close to the Infant School. The reason for this was that Ian Howard had maintained this for the Parish Council for a number of years. The land was owned by the County Council, but the Clerk thought they may be supportive of such a suggestion. The Parish Council could then consider a new seat and bin which could be facing towards Ian's home.

Cllrs Flores-Moore and Vickers felt that the suggestion was worthy of a discussion with Ian Howard's family, before proceeding with an application to West Sussex County Council for permission.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk should make enquiries about the removal of the Play Area in Poppy Close checking with the Planning/Leisure Departments that this was acceptable in terms of the original planning permission and what if any action should be taken to ensure play is provided elsewhere within the parish. Subject to these permissions the Clerk to investigate the cost of removal of the equipment and surfacing.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk should have the chain put back on the play area and appropriate signage stating that this was out of use.

It was RESOLVED that subject to discussions with Mr.Ian Howard's family that the Clerk should progress the possibility of a remembrance area on the green land adjacent to the Children & Family Centre/Southwater Infant Academy. The Clerk would cost the remembrance seat and bin.

FG97/11/16 HIGHWAY SIGNAGE

The Clerk stated that following a request from Members a response from Highways had been received in relation to signage for lorries in Blakes Farm Road and the footpath crossing the A24.

The Planning Committee asked that the committee consider whether it wished to pay for such signage.

After discussion it was agreed that the Council could purchase this signage via the Ringfenced signage cost centre.

It was APPROVED that the Clerk and Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee should investigate the cost and subject to this being within the cost identified by Highways, order the signage and fingerpost required.

West Sussex Local Pension Scheme – Pooling Arrangements

The Clerk advised Members that having agreed to remain within the Pooling Arrangements the formal agreement had been received. The Clerk would propose that this be completed and returned.

It was AGREED that the Council should sign the Pooling Arrangements Legal Agreement.

The Clerk referred members to the copy presentations received at a recent Pensions Seminar attended by the Clerk and Payroll Administrator, together with information regarding the proposed rate of pensions payable by the Council for the forthcoming 3 years this being 22.1%. This figure has been accounted for within the budget for 17/18.

Members NOTED the information regarding the Pension Scheme for 2017/18.

FG99/11/16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Finance & General Purposes meeting will be **Wednesday, 7th December 2016.**

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.