

**The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2016 at Beeson House, Lintot Square, Southwater commencing at 7.30 pm.**

**Chairman: Mr P. Buckley**

**Councillors: Mr L. Apted Mr G. Cole  
Mr K. Diamond Mr A Green  
Mr M. Neale Mr G. Watkins  
Mr N. Whitear**

**County: Apologies provided by Cllr B. Watson OBE**

**District: Apologies provided by Cllrs I. Howard, Dr J. Chidlow**

**Clerk: Mrs J. Nagy**

**Press: Not present**

**Public: Four**

**FG30/06/16 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.**

Mr Whitear said that he was still of the opinion that the temporary traffic lights at the Cedar Drive roundabout were “out of synch” as he had waited 8 minutes to come out of Cedar Drive.

Mr Watkins asked if it was known what traffic light system was being used, but the Acting Clerk did not know. She will report concerns to Berkeleys.

Mr Watkins reported that Cripplegate Lane was flooded.

Mr Piper reported that the drainage pipe which ran underneath Worthing Rd in front of Wheelwrights was blocked, causing water to back up into his garden.

The Acting Clerk will report these flooding incidents to Highways.

Mr Piper asked if the Union Jack could be flown at half mast on 1<sup>st</sup> July, as this was the centenary of first day of the Battle of the Somme. All agreed.

Mr Whitear asked if the flag should be flown at half mast following the tragic death of MP Jo Cox. It was generally felt that this would not be appropriate as there was no connection to Southwater.

The Acting Clerk said that today it was Sussex Day, but due to the torrential rain during the day, it has not been possible to lower the flag pole to put up the Sussex flag. However, it would be Armed Forces Day on 25<sup>th</sup> June, and she would ensure that the Armed Forces flag would be flown over the weekend.

The Acting Clerk suggested that she draw up a list of days to be marked by the flying of different flags, and a protocol for the flying of the Union Jack at half mast to be agreed by the Council. All agreed.

**Mr Piper left the meeting.**

**FG31/06/16 APOLOGIES**

There were apologies from Mrs Flores-Moore and Mrs Vickers.

**Members noted these apologies.**

**FG32/06/16 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

The Acting 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.

**Mr Neale declared an interest in FG40/06/16 Community Grants, as he is Vice Chair of Horsham Neighbourhood Watch.**

**FG33/06/16 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman reported that the Clerk was due to come back to work on Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> June; more details will be given under Personnel, Pensions and Training

**FG34/06/16 CORRESPONDENCE**

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

**Members NOTED the correspondence received.**

West Sussex Waste Recycling Site Consultation

The public consultation period has now closed, and the Acting Clerk reported that she had responded as instructed at the last meeting.

However, response to this consultation, and indeed other WSCC consultations can now only be done on line, with no address available for written comments. The on-line form is more geared towards individuals, with questions such as "how often do you visit" which have to be answered before proceeding. There is a section to say if you are a private individual or an organisation, but the Acting Clerk has written to Brad Watson, County Councillor to point out that not everyone has access to a computer, and answers given by

an organisation may affect the results.

**Members noted the Acting Clerk's comments on WSCC consultations**

Age UK

Age UK has written to thank the Parish Council for its grant of £350, which will go towards funding the Information and Advice Service which visits households and isolated older people in their homes, helping individuals identify benefits and assist with form filling.

Court Case

The Acting Clerk reported that a gym customer is taking the Council to court over an incident which occurred in 2013 during an induction. The Acting Clerk fully investigated the incident at the time to the Council's satisfaction. The matter is being dealt with by the Council's insurance company who will be defending the case.

**Members noted that legal action is being taken against the Council and asked the Acting Clerk to keep them informed.**

Turners Close Pond

The Acting Clerk reported that she had been contacted by Southern Water which wants to take water samples from the pond, prior to constructing a new sewer connection in the area coming from Church Lane. The purpose of the sampling is to check for the presence of Great Crested Newts.

Although Southern Water has a right to access the pond, it is easier with the landowner's consent, which the Acting Clerk has given on behalf of the Council. Great Crested Newts have been relocated into the Pond from other areas in the past and the Council put in newt habitats to encourage them to stay. Therefore, she has asked for the results of the water sampling to see if the newts are still there.

**Members agreed with the action taken by the Acting Clerk**

**FG35/06/16 MINUTES**

Finance & General Purposes Committee, 11<sup>th</sup> May 2016

Mr Diamond said that he had given his apologies for this meeting but these had not been recorded.

**It was RESOLVED by all present that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2016 be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting, including the Confidential Minute, after the amendment to include the apologies of Mr Diamond.**

**FG36/06/16 ACCOUNTS & FINANCIAL MATTERS**

**Members NOTED and APPROVED the information provided in that this was a true**

**and correct position of the Council's financial affairs as at 16<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

Purchase of New Computer at Leisure Centre

The Acting Clerk referred members to the Leisure Centre Manager's report relating to the purchase of a new computer at an overall cost of £518.43 + VAT.

**It was RESOLVED by all present that a new computer would be purchased at a cost of £518.43 + VAT**

Update on Friday Lunch Club

The Lunch Club meets every Friday, and provides lunch and activities/entertainment for £6.50 for those aged over 50. Currently the cost of booked entertainment exceeds income, as the average attendance is five. However, the Club was established with a grant, and there is still some £1800 in ring-fenced funds, so the Acting Clerk suggested that the Club continues to run. Ideally, she would like to promote the Club more, in the hope of attracting new members, but this has yet to be addressed to staffing shortages.

Mr Watkins said that when Age UK gave a presentation to the Council, it said that it would promote the Southwater Lunch Club. As the Council's representative on this body, he will take this up with them.

Mr Cole said that the Dementia Group which meets on Mondays is well attended, and perhaps the Lunch Club could be promoted to the members.

**Members agreed that that entertainment should continue to be booked for the Friday Lunch Club whilst funds allow. The Acting Clerk is to promote the Club generally once staffing allows, but will try to encourage members of Dementia Group to attend in the mean time.**

Replacement gate posts at Turners Close Open Space

The gate posts have rotted at the entrance to this open space, necessitating replacement at a cost of £110.00 + VAT, including installation

**It was RESOLVED by all present that gate posts would be purchased at a cost of £110.00 + VAT.**

Clearance of Fly-Tipping on Allotment Site

Councillors will recall that a large amount of garden refuse was dumped on the Allotment Site in Easteds Lane, which is regarded as fly-tipping. The amount of refuse was too large to be removed by the District Council, so a quote has been obtained from a contractor to chip it. The Allotment Society requested this, rather than complete removal, as the chippings can be used by them on the allotments. The cost of this will be £380 + VAT.

**It was RESOLVED by all present that the garden refuse would be chipped and left on site at a cost of £380.00 + VAT.**

Refurbishment of Notice Boards

Two notice boards are in need of refurbishment, with the felt backing panels in need of replacement. The cost of this from the original supplier is £259.00 + VAT

**It was RESOLVED by all present that noticeboards would be refurbished at a cost of £259 + VAT.**

**FG37/06/16 PAYMENT SCHEDULE**

The Acting Clerk presented a payment schedules to 16<sup>th</sup> June 2016 for approval in the sum of £27,800.32.

Mr Whitear asked why there were so many BT bills, and the Acting Clerk said that there were several phone lines to each council-owned property, including intruder alarm lines.

**It was RESOLVED by all present that the payment schedules dated 16<sup>th</sup> June 2016 be APPROVED in the sum of £27,800.32**

**FG38/06/16 FUTURE OF SOUTHWATER SKATE PARK**

The Acting Clerk advised that she had put this matter on the agenda at the Council's request.

In July 2012 the removal of the skate park was discussed, due to ongoing vandalism, and the price quoted for this was in the region of £4000. Radii Ramps then contacted the Council and a programme of repair and maintenance was agreed, which has been ongoing to date.

The Skate Park has been vandalised on several occasions since the initial repair; recently end panels are consistently removed, with persons taking shelter inside the structure. Litter has also been an issue

With a new Skate Park being planned as part of the Berkeleys development, members may wish to consider the future of the Skate Park in Ben's Field.

There is currently £1132 in Skate Park ringfenced, and £16,022 allocated in Section 106 monies for ongoing repairs.

Mr Watkins said that he had asked for the item to be put on the agenda, as he felt that the Skate Park was no longer fit for the purpose. It is attracting people who are not local to the area, and who are not looking after it. It is in the wrong place, in his opinion, and is built of the wrong materials. He believes that it should now be permanently closed and removed from the site.

Mr Buckley said that the location was chosen the only site option available at the time; the Skate Park was built of wood based on local consultation. Whilst he agreed that the removal should be considered, he did not think that this should be before the new Skate Park is commissioned. As there is still funding available, it should be maintained until that funding ran out.

He proposed that that a quote was sought for its removal off site and that Radii Ramps be consulted to ascertain whether any of the materials can be recycled.

Mr Diamond said that he was disappointed that this stage had been reached, but that he agreed that it should be removed once the new concrete park was up and running.

Mr Cole suggested that the end panels could be removed entirely as they were not structural. This would assist in the ventilation of the ramp, and would stop them keep being removed.

The Acting Clerk said that she had delayed installation of the new bin, until she knew the outcome of these discussions.

**It was RESOLVED that the Skate Park in Ben's Field would remain in situ until the new concrete skate park proposed by Berkeleys was in operation, or until Section 106 funding had been used up. The Acting Clerk will seek a quote from Radian Ramps to carry out repairs to existing damage, and seek advice as to whether the end panels can or cannot be removed without detriment to the structure. In addition, Radian Ramps would be asked to quote for the entire removal of the structure, to be held on file for the future. The new bin is to be installed on site.**

#### **FG39/06/16 TENDER FOR NEW GYM EQUIPMENT**

The Acting Clerk referred Councillors to the Leisure Centre Manager's proposals for the replacement and refurbishment of gym equipment.

The Acting Clerk was asked if she could provide profit figures for the gym. She replied that she did not have that information to hand. She could supply information with regard to income, but overhead expenditure for staffing costs for example may be difficult to apportion.

Mr Whitear was of the opinion that it was important that the whole gym looked welcoming; it was not just about the equipment. He was in favour of re-decorating and new carpets etc. as per Mr Brew's recommendations.

**It was RESOLVED that the Leisure Centre Manager would commence a full tender process for the leasing the replacement of all gym equipment (cardio and resistance) and to allow for a budget of up to £5000 for refurbishment of the gym.**

#### **FG40/06/16 COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATIONS**

The Acting Clerk asked Councillors to consider the following grant application, the paperwork for which having been previously circulated:

##### Junior Neighbourhood Watch for Southwater

**Mr Neale declared an interest in this item, as he is Vice Chair of Neighbourhood Watch. He left the room.**

The Horsham District Neighbourhood Watch is promoting an after school club for Years 5 and 6, comprising 6 one hour sessions for 16 pupils, aiming to develop the concept of children helping to achieve a safe home environment and contributing to a neighbourly friendship and cooperation in the community. The local PCSO, and West Sussex

Emergency and Rescue Team assist with the project, along with a Magistrate conducting a role playing scenario in a Court.

The course has already taken place at Southwater Junior Academy in 2015, and the requested grant of £304 will cover the running costs to hold another course at Castlewood Primary this term, plus another course at the Junior Academy in Christmas term 2016 or Easter term 2017 when the original attendees will have moved on to secondary school.

**At this point, Mr Buckley proposed the suspension of Standing Orders to allow members of the public to speak. This was seconded by Mr Diamond and agreed by all.**

Andrew Moffat, Chairman of the Horsham District NHW, was present at the meeting and said that the Acting Clerk had covered the matter clearly. All Neighbourhood Watch people were volunteers, so relied on grants and donations.

Mr Diamond asked if the Rotary Club had been approached for a grant. Mr Moffat said that he would do so.

The Acting Clerk noted that hall hire costs were noted in the Accounts as an expense, and that members may like to consider offering free hall hire as part of the grant element, as she was aware that the group used the Council Chamber FOC for their regular meetings.

**After discussion, it was RESOLVED that a grant of £350 would be awarded to Junior Neighbourhood Watch. Neighbourhood Watch will contact the parish office direct with their booking requirements, and once received, these will be considered with a view to offering free hall hire at Easteds Barn.**

**Mr Neale rejoined the meeting.**

**FG41/06/16 POLICE MATTERS**

The Acting Clerk reported that the latest figures available from Sussex Police website was in April 2016, when 39 crimes were reported in Southwater, these being:

Anti Social behaviour	15
Burglary	1
Violence & Sexual Offences	5
Theft	5
Drugs	0
Criminal Damage	10
Vehicle crime	0
Public Order Offence	2
Other	1

**Members noted this information.**

**Mr Moffat left the meeting.**

**FG42/06/16 COUNCIL PREMISES & LAND\*\***

Church Lane Premises

Paperwork for the new lease is being drawn up. There has been a delay in that Berkeleys now own the head lease, and papers are now with their solicitors.

Beeson House offices

A prospective tenant has been found for one of the upstairs offices in Beeson House, and paperwork for the new lease is being drawn up. Delay has been caused due to confusion over which office was required, and due to the Landlord, the District Council Legal department not producing the documentation as promised.

The Acting Clerk advised that as negotiations on the above leases are proving lengthy, legal costs will be high.

Application to manage land adjacent to the Children and Family Centre

The Acting Clerk referred members to a letter from Mr Rehman-Furs from the Downslink Permaculture Initiative already circulated.

**At this point, Mr Buckley proposed the suspension of Standing Orders to allow members of the public to speak. This was seconded by Mr Apted and agreed by all.**

Mr Rehman-Furs was present at the meeting, and gave a short presentation on the impact of climate change on the natural environment. An environmentally friendly garden on the land adjacent to the Children and Family Centre would create a carbon store, enriched by microorganisms. He is already leading such a project at the Infant Academy.

He is keen for this vacant patch of land to be productive, and plans to enhance the natural layout of the wooded area to provide a wildlife haven with edible foodstuffs for humans and animals. It would assist local residents to become more connected with their food sources. Local people could bring vegetable matter and grass clippings to be composted.

Mr Watkins asked if the land would be reinstated should the project fail. Mr Rehman-Furs said that the area would not radically change, and could be left to revert to its natural state if necessary.

Mr Whitear asked how the area would be monitored. He could envisage some people dumping large amounts of garden waste which would be tantamount to fly tipping. Mr Rehman-Furs said that the general public would not be encouraged to leave garden waste. It would be controlled to build up slowly.

The Acting Clerk reminded members that the Council did not own the land, although it has been maintaining it for some years, as ownership is unclear. She envisaged it may be difficult to grant a licence to Mr Rehman-Furs given the ownership issue, so will seek legal advice on the matter.

Mr Whitear was concerned therefore, about the insurance implications, as if not owned by the Council, would not be covered. Mr Rehman-Furs said that he was insured to manage

land. Mr Whitear wondered who would be responsible if someone suffered an accident or injury on the land.

**A member of the public left the meeting.**

**It was generally agreed that whilst the Council was in favour of the project in principle, ownership of the land needed to be established. The Council's insurance company would need to be consulted with regards to liability. The Acting Clerk is to progress this and report back to the next meeting.**

Locking of Gates at Leisure Centre Fairbank Rd car park

It has been suggested that the Council considers closing and locking the barrier to the Fairbank Rd car park during the evenings of summer months, as youths are congregating in cars etc. and causing nuisance.

One proposal is that the barrier is locked at 8pm (6pm weekends) by a member of staff at the Leisure Centre and reopened at 8am (9am weekends) during the months of July and August.

Mr Watkins asked if there were any planning regulations to preclude this. The Acting Clerk said to her knowledge, there was not, but she would check. She would notify the Estates Manager and the Police accordingly.

**It was RESOLVED that the barrier at the Fairbank Rd car park would be closed between the hours of 8pm and 8am on weekdays, and between 6pm and 9am on weekends to see if this assisted in combatting incidents of anti-social behaviour during summer months. This will commence on 4<sup>th</sup> July and end on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2016.**

Easteds Barn

Appeals have been made in the past for volunteers to assist in managing the flower beds etc. at Easteds Barn, but no-one has come forward. The Council's maintenance team are only employed on ground maintenance work for one day a week, and cannot keep up with the task of keeping the area tidy.

The Acting Clerk suggested that she seek quotes to tidy up the area, on both a one off and a regular basis for this Committee to consider at the next meeting. It is important that the Barn area looks tidy as it is promoted as a function venue.

**It was agreed that the Acting Clerk will progress seeking such quotations.**

Easteds Barn Cleaner

The Cleaner for Easteds Barn attends after every weekend booking to ensure that the building is clean and tidy for the next customer, and that the terms and conditions of hire have been complied with, each visit lasting about 15 minutes. She is paid Saturday (time and a half) or Sunday rates (double time) accordingly. This assists the Parish Council in agreeing to return deposits.

The Acting Clerk would like authorisation to pay the cleaner for one hour's time on each visit.

**It was RESOLVED that a minimum of one hour's pay would be authorised for such visits to the Barn to check the condition after parties at weekends.**

Mr Diamond suggested that the Cleaner be asked if she would be a keyholder at the Barn. The Acting Clerk will progress this and report back.

Function Supervisor

The Acting Clerk wanted to clarify conditions as the Leisure Centre Manager, one of the Function Supervisors had asked if it should be a requirement that parents are present at 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> birthday functions.

**It was confirmed that parents should be present at a 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> party, or younger, but at 18, a person is a legal adult.**

Mr Watkins asked the Acting Clerk to check with the insurance company in relation to being an adult at 18.

**It was confirmed that a Function Supervisor should be present if a function served alcohol, even if that was supplied FOC by the hosts.**

The Acting Clerk advised that as function bookings were increasing, more supervisors would need to be recruited.

**Members noted and agreed this requirement.**

Trees on Parish Council Land

There has been an ongoing issue with roots from trees on Parish Council land causing damage to paving at a property in Charlock Way. Up to this point, the Acting Clerk has advised the householder that it is his responsibility to sever the roots, as she would with any overhanging branches.

However, the householder himself sought advice, and as a consequence this Committee instructed the Acting Clerk to discuss the matter with Mr Quaife, the Council's tree consultant. He advised that the Council has a higher duty of responsibility than a lay person in relation to its trees, and this would be taken into account should legal action ensue. He suggested that the Council should make good the damage that its trees have caused.

The householder has sought three quotes to carry out the work, on the proviso that all are qualified tree surgeons, and have £10 million public liability insurance, which are requirements for Council tree contractors. These have now been received and all relate to the digging of a trench on the property side of the fence to sever roots, infill, then to lift and relay paving slabs, which vary between £450 and £1190 + VAT

**After discussion, the Committee RESOLVED that notwithstanding the advice of Mr Quaife, it would not accept liability for the encroachment of tree roots from its land, as in this case, no damage had been made to the house, only to garden features.**

The Acting Clerk reminded Councillors that the five yearly tree surveys ensured that trees are in a safe condition. Residents complaining about tree growth are advised that they are entitled to trim back branches to their fence line as per the Council's policy.

However, in recent months, complaints have been received about trees that have been planted too close to fence lines and have started to cause damage to houses. Bearing in mind Mr Quaife's advice that Councils have an increased level of responsibility towards their trees, the Acting Clerk would like to start investigating the costs of a tree management plan. This will take into account comments made by Councillors who recently carried out the annual risk assessment of parish land.

**It was agreed that the Acting Clerk would investigate the cost implications and otherwise of a Tree Management Plan.**

### **FG43/06/16 PERSONNEL, PENSIONS & TRAINING\*\***

#### Membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks

The Acting Clerk advised that both she and the Clerk are members of the SLCC, and the Council pays their annual subscriptions, which entitles them to access to training and information relevant to their role, so is of benefit to the Council as a whole. Indeed, the Acting Clerk is Secretary to the Sussex Branch of the SLCC.

However, part of the role of the SLCC is to advise in disputes between as Clerk and his/her Council, acting as a trade union. Therefore it was agreed at an Extraordinary General Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> June, that a separate body would be created, namely the Association of Local Council Clerks or ALCC, to support and represent clerks in any employment issue, and to lobby for improved pay and conditions.

Existing members of SLCC are able to join the ALCC free of charge up until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016, after which membership will cost £10. The Acting Clerk advised that the Council reconsider the SLCC subscription when it is due for renewal in early 2017, as she suggests that it pay for SLCC subscription only for herself and the Clerk, with each being responsible for her own ALCC subscription, as it is not usual for an employer to pay an employee's trade union fees.

It is not yet clear if the SLCC subscription will be reduced, given that the trade union element will be removed.

**Members noted this information.**

#### Re-paying First Aid Courses

It is written into staff contracts that should they undertake training which is paid for by the Council, and then leaves the Council's employ within two years, then the cost of the training must be re-paid, on a sliding scale.

First Aid training must be undertaken on an annual basis, to ensure that qualifications are up to date. Staff are asking if this could be exempt from the repayment policy, as it is necessary to comply with Health & Safety requirements.

**It was RESOLVED that fees paid on First Aid training would not have to be re-paid if a member of staff left the Council's employ, due to the need to comply with the Council's First Aid Policy and general Health and Safety requirements**

Ms Carol Fossick

Ms Fossick is employed as a Neighbourhood Plan and Project Administrator, with her contract stating that she works 20 hours per week, with an additional 5 hours if required.

She is assisting the Acting Clerk with various matters over and above her usual remit during the ongoing absence of the Clerk. Having consulted with the Chairman, the Acting Clerk has asked Ms Fossick to work the additional five hours as from Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> June.

**Members noted this information**

At her recent appraisal, Ms Fossick has agreed to complete the Certificate of Local Council Administration which would make her a qualified clerk.

The Acting Clerk asked the Committee if they wished Ms Fossick to register now for the course, which takes around a year to complete, or whether they wanted to wait until the findings of the Visioning Report had been approved.

**It was RESOLVED that Ms Fossick should commence work on the CiLCA as soon as possible.**

The Clerk's holiday entitlement and lieu pay

The Acting Clerk advised that an employee absent on sick leave is entitled to holiday for the period that he or she is not at work.

During the period January to March 2016, the Clerk was entitled to 2½ days holiday, having taken the rest of her entitlement in the previous months. The Acting Clerk asked that members agree to carry this outstanding leave into the 2016/2017 holiday year.

**It was RESOLVED that the Clerk's outstanding leave of 2½ days be carried over into the 2016/2017 holiday year; her total entitlement would then be 29½ days.**

The Council resolved that all lieu time accrued by employees in the year 2015/2016 be paid at the end of March 2016. Whilst clarifying the Clerk's leave, it was discovered that she was owed 3 days in lieu time. The Acting Clerk apologised for overlooking this in the March payment.

**It was RESOLVED that the Clerk would be paid 3 days lieu time owing in her June salary.**

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

**The next item is minuted under CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE**

The date of the next Finance & General Purposes meeting will be Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2016, this being the week after the Planning Committee.

**The meeting closed at 9.50 pm.**