

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 4^h December, 2013 at Beeson House, Lintot Square, Southwater commencing at 7.30 pm.

Chairman: Mr P. Buckley

**Councillors: Mr L. Apted Mr G. Cole
Mrs.P.Flores-Moore Mrs.J.Hutchings
Mr M. Neale Mrs.J.Williamson**

County: Apologies provided by Cllr B. Watson OBE

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

Clerk: Mrs C.Tobin

Press: Not present

Public: 1 Member of the Public

FG121/12/13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting and then highlighted the housekeeping rules and also the fact that mobile phones should be switched off during the meeting, members of the public not being permitted to tape or film meetings of the Council.

Mrs.Flores-Moore stated that she would just like to thank all the staff and volunteers for their hard work in putting on the Southwater Christmas festival. Mrs.Williamson said, that she had received positive comments as had other members of the Council present. Mr.Buckley stated that he would be doing a formal announcement later in the meeting, but thanked Mrs.Flores-Moore for her comments.

At this point in the meeting it was RESOLVED by all present that the Chairman suspend standing orders.

Mr.Piper informed the Committee that the memorial seat in respect of Ian Cooper required attention; this being located by the doctors surgery.

Mr.Piper stated that whilst he was aware that the hedge in Station Road had been cut, local residents were asking for the height to be lopped. The Clerk stated that this work was carried out by the parish council on behalf of both authorities with each paying 50/50 towards the cost. Mr.Buckley stated that in relation to the height reduction, various residents had not wanted the top taken out of the hedge whilst others had. The Clerk suggested to Mr.Piper that the residents concerned contact her office.

Mr.Piper asked whether the Council were still considering photovoltaic cells in relation to the electricity supply at the Leisure Centre, as the new rules relating to these would be changing in April 2014. The Chairman indicated to the Clerk that she should progress this and ask contractors to visit the site to obtain prices. The Clerk reminded Members that there was not currently a budget for such expenditure; Mr.Buckley felt that the Council upon receipt of the information could then decide whether to proceed from possibly ring-fenced funds.

The Clerk to pursue contractors and prices in relation to the provision of photovoltaic cells at the Leisure Centre.

Mr.Piper also asked the Chairman whether in light of the fracking issue elsewhere in Sussex, did the Parish Council have a policy on this. Mr.Buckley confirmed that the Council did not have a policy on fracking; Mr.Piper stated that he knew investigations had taken place previously. The Clerk responded that any fracking site would be subject to a planning application she believed, and therefore it was important that the Council did not express a viewpoint at this stage. The Clerk suggested that she contact a colleague who was indeed involved in this issue and that she obtain further information from that source and bring this back to Council for report and discussion.

The Clerk to contact a colleague to discuss and obtain information on the fracking issue.

FG122/12/13

APOLOGIES

There were apologies received and noted from Mr.D.Nagy, Mrs.C.Vickers, Mr.G.Watkins

Members noted this.

No apologies were received from Dr.A.Cash.

FG123/12/13

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations at this point in the meeting.

FG124/12/13

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman said that he would like to take this opportunity of firstly thanking all the staff involved in the Christmas Festival it was the best yet. The Chairman went on to thank all those performers who took part and most importantly the sponsors who made the event possible. The Find the Father Christmas Competition and other competitions would be drawn or announced at Full Council.

FG125/12/13 CORRESPONDENCE

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

There was no further correspondence for note.

FG126/12/13 MINUTES

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2013 be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting.

FG127/12/13 ACCOUNTS & FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Clerk provided Members with information on the current financial position of the Council to 4th December 2013, including Income and Expenditure and Bank Balances. The Clerk informed Members that the figures are correct as of the end of October with reconciliation for November and part December still on-going. The delays being in that members of staff had been involved in the organisation of the Christmas event.

Mrs.Flores-Moore questioned the amount of £15k and asked what this related to. The Clerk responded that this was the grant provided to the Methodist Church in relation to the provision of a full time youth worker in Southwater. The amount had risen a couple of years previously due to the fact that one of the partners had withdrawn.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the financial information provided was a true and correct position of the Council as at 4th December 2013.

National Westminster Bank Current Account

Members were advised that the Clerk is to write to the Nat West regarding a charge levied against the current account with this bank. The Clerk is to dispute this due to the fact that the Council were advised that it had to open a current account to then transfer monies to a deposit account in which monies now sit. Mr.Buckley felt that whilst writing the Clerk pursue the fact that the Council had lost interest on its funds, seeking redress.

Members NOTED the Clerk's intention to write to National Westminster Bank regarding the charge.

Lloyds Bank

The Clerk notified members that the bank were now ready to open a deposit account but the Clerk required Members to agree as to which term they wished to invest the monies for eg., 3 months, 6 months or one year the rates

being quoted to Members. Mr.Cole said that whilst these rates were poor, he expected interest rates to rise later in the year.

It was APPROVED by all present that the Clerk should invest the £30k for a period of one year at .98%.

FG128/12/13**ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**

The Clerk presented a payment schedule to 4th December, 2013 in the sum of £ 20,182.01.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the payment schedule dated 4th December, 2013 be approved in the sum of £20,182.01.

FG129/12/13**DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2014/15**

The Clerk advised Members that she had now received tentative figures in relation to the Band D calculations provided by the District Council; this figure having risen from 3890.5 to 3984.2., taking into account additional housing and changes in benefit. The Council have also received a further 22% reduction in the grant provided by the District Council last year. Again this is due to the Government changing the Revenue Grant to the principle authority.

The Government has indicated that whilst it is watching the precepts of the town and parish council sector, it does not anticipate that at this point envisage capping or invoking the referendum process for this sector. The National Association of Local Councils continues to lobby, as Members can see from correspondence received on behalf of the sector. When discussing the budget next year for 2015/16 it may be that the Parish Council will have to find an additional £15k which will not then be funded. Parish and Town Councils had until last year had the benefit of 100% funding.

The revised budget provided by email to Members with hard copies also provided, has allowed for the following:-

- Reduction in rental income for the offices being created in Beeson House, for due to the delays involved the proposed tenant for the ground floor had withdrawn. This and the downturn in the economic climate has seen a reduction in the potential income stream.
- Provision made for repairs to the leisure centre roof.
- Provision for new sound system in Beeson House, which clients and public alike have complained about. It is also possible that the Council may be required to allow the taping and filming of meetings, and this provision will allow the Council to tape meetings and supply a copy to the public if requested to do so.

The overall budget equates to an increase of 1.7% in cash terms this is £12,176, Band D and Increase of £1.39. Again much of this is due to the changes

Mr.Buckley said the his personal view was that it was prudent to reduce the expected income on the small office units, but agreed with Mr.Cole that the economy may be improving. Mr.Cole felt that the budget was prudent as did other Members present. Councillors noted the continuing lobbying of Government in respect of the changes to funding within the town and parish council sector.

It was PROPOSED and APPROVED by all present that the Finance & General Purposes Committee recommend a Budget of 1.7% Band D equivalent increase £1.39. The stipulation being that this resolution may be subject to amendment in light of discussions at the District Council in relation to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme on the 11th December 2013.

FG130/12/13

OPERATION WATERSHED

The Clerk referred to the Confidential Report in relation to the tendering for the first phase of works under the project Operation Watershed, with six areas within the parish having been identified as requiring further investigation in relation to flooding. Six companies had been tendered but only two had responded, the preferred supplier being a locally based company.

Mr.Cole stated that when reviewing the tenders, one in particular had a list of qualifications, some of which would not have additional costs, however, in his opinion others may and therefore the difference in quotes was negligible.

It was RESOLVED and APPROVED by all present that the Finance & General Purposes Committee recommend to Full Council for acceptance the tender received from Wilbur in relation to the first phase of Operation Watershed.

FG131/12/13

POLICE MATTERS

The Clerk referred to figures provided by PCSO Cecil which indicated the overall recorded crime figures for the period 2012 – 2013. Mr.Buckley asked whether there was a further breakdown as yet on the individual reasons behind the crime figures for Southwater. The Clerk stated that she had only received total crime figures for each month with a year on year comparison.

Members NOTED the figures provided.

FG132/12/13 SOUTHWATER LEISURE CENTRE

Provision of New Trampoline Mats

The Clerk referred Members to the Leisure Centre Manager's report in relation to the provision of new trampoline mats. Members felt that as the tutor had indicated that the mats required replacement the Council should do so.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Council APPROVE the purchase of four new trampoline mats on the grounds of safety.

Chain Link Fencing to the Perimeter of the Leisure Centre

A risk assessment was carried out in relation to the existing fencing which in places is serving no purpose but is in a dilapidated state of repair. It is necessary to remove sections and repair other sections and for this purpose two quotations have been received one in the sum of £280 and another in the sum of £515. The Clerk stated that where there were houses at risk it was the intention to retain such fencing, making good if possible.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Council APPROVE the quotation received in the sum of £280 plus VAT, in order to reduce the potential risk to the council this task being delegated to the Clerk and Leisure Centre Manager.

Waste Recycling

Further to the Council approving the provision of waste recycling units for the Leisure Centre, unfortunately it now appears that the Parish Council were misquoted on the price for the units. A formal complaint has been submitted and is now being investigated by the District Council.

Councillors NOTED the Clerks comments.

FG133/12/13 COUNCIL PREMISES & LAND

Nothing to report other than she would be meeting the appointed surveyor in relation to Easteds Barn and Beeson House.

FG134/12/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Finance & General Purposes meeting would be Wednesday 8th January 2013 at 7.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm.