

## LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **Administration Sub Committee** held on **Wednesday, 25 November 2009** at the **United Reformed Church, High Street, Lindfield**

**Present:** Mr. W. Blunden (Chairman)  
Rev. M. Davies  
Mrs. M. Nicolle  
Mr. S. Willcox

**Also Present:** 1 member of the public

**In attendance:** Mrs. C. Irwin (Parish Clerk)  
Mrs. S. Koliien (Responsible Financial Officer)  
Mr. P. Hemsley (Deputy Parish Clerk)

The meeting was opened at 9.30 a.m. by the Chairman of Council, Councillor Blunden.

### 1. WELCOME AND EMERGENCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Blunden welcomed those present and Cllr. Davies made the appropriate emergency announcements for the United Reformed Church.

### 2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr. Blunden was proposed and seconded and unanimously **ELECTED** as Chairman of the Administration Sub Committee.

### 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence as all members of the Sub Committee were present.

### 4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY MATTER ON THE AGENDA

No declarations of interest were received.

### 5. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Mr. N. Kerslake commented on the Administration budget proposals:

- the decrease in the salaries figure: the contingency for sickness etc should be allowed for in the General Reserve.
- the reduction of NIC by £3,500: the figures for previous years must have been inaccurate
- The General Reserve should be considered in the context of the general budget and it should be at least a third of the budget.
- The Council should be undertaking benchmarking processes to compare its systems with those of other similarly placed councils.
- The rent for Denmans Court was visible in the budget paper and Mr. Kerslake considered this to be high under the circumstances – he suggested that £6 a square foot would be an appropriate rent. He also stated that the Parish Council should be considering all the options including extending 6 Denmans Lane to the rear.

### 6. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE ADMINISTRATION SUB COMMITTEE

The Terms of Reference which had been approved by the Finance and General Purposes (F&GP) Committee on 23 July 2009 were noted.

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### 7. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OFFICE WORKLOAD WORKING PARTY HELD ON 27 AUGUST 2008.

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Office Workload Working Party held on 27 August 2008 were noted. This Working Party had been replaced by the Administration Sub Committee which had a wider remit. It was noted that the schedule of areas of responsibility for which Councillors were taking the lead had, in the main, been a successful exercise.

### 8. ISSUES RELATING TO THE PROPOSED RENTAL OF ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATION AT DENMANS COURT.

It was noted that the Council was still unable to sign the lease as it appeared to be a standard lease for a block of premises and was not appropriate for this particular letting. It was **AGREED** to recommend to the F&GP Committee that the Council's Solicitor should be informed that the Council was not prepared to accept the lease as drafted; that he should be instructed to return the lease to the Landlord's Solicitor requesting a bespoke lease based on the one for Cottage Carpets and to state that unless a satisfactory resolution had been achieved by 24 December, the Parish Council would withdraw. It was accepted that this was likely to incur an increased cost in Solicitors' fees.

### 9. ISSUES RELATING TO THE RUNNING OF THE PARISH OFFICE

It was noted that when preparing the draft budget analysis the RFO, in consultation with the Clerk, had made allowance for purchase of a lockable cupboard for financial records, a safe and a new computer for the downstairs office. It was suggested that when it became clear whether extending into Denmans Court was achievable, the whole issue of furnishing and equipment, including telephones and computer network would have to be considered and that it would be premature to take action before this was confirmed.

### 10. ADMINISTRATION BUDGET FOR 2010/11

The draft Administration budget analysis prepared by the RFO was considered item by item. The draft budget was **AGREED** with three amendments, increasing the amounts suggested by the RFO for the following items:

- Insurance (from £1,700 to £2,000) – because the fidelity insurance had to be increased as it was calculated on the basis of the precept which was now higher
- Electricity, Denmans Lane (from £400 to £500) – it did not seem prudent to reduce this item
- Office Equipment, Denmans Court (from £3,000 to £5,000) – adequate provision needed to be made to ensure that the office was set up to run efficiently.

#### NOTED:

- It was difficult to put a figure on Salaries because of variable working hours of the Deputy Clerk and RFO, but £42,000 seemed to be a reasonable figure.
- The RFO would ensure that long term sickness would be covered by the General Reserve which was to be increased to the recommended level.
- The NIC amount had been high because when she was the full time Clerk, the RFO had been on Schedule A as she was not in the Local Government Pension Scheme. The present Clerk and Deputy were both in the LGPS.
- Travel expenses was to be increased as more conferences seemed to be further away.
- Training requirements were normally less during the second half of the life of the Council but it was not recommended to reduce the amount as there seemed to be more training events available and there was now a charge for the AirS / SALC Conference.
- Decorating of 6 Denmans Lane was not likely to be carried out this year and would be rebudgeted for in the 2010/11 budget.

The RFO would amend the figures on the draft Administration Budget Analysis for tabling at the F&GP meeting on 26 November.

Members also considered the remaining items on the F&GP Committee's draft budget and **AGREED** the recommendations of the RFO:

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- Chairman's fund – to remain as last year (£500).
- Grants and donations – to remain as last year (£1,500) but F&GP to consider recommendation to consider ways of encouraging more applications from local organisations.
- Subscriptions – increased to £2,000 because SALC subscription had increased and the Council had taken membership of the British Toilets Association and the Ramblers Association.
- Village Directory – to remain at £6,000 as it was anticipated that there would be an increase in printing costs for the 2011 edition as the price had remained the same for the last three editions.
- Newsletter – to be increased to £1,700 on the basis of the cost of 4 newsletters and one annual report published in Lindfield Life.
- Members' allowances – to be reduced to £2,000.
- Rental of additional office accommodation - to remain at £9,000 based on the rental of Denmans Court but this would be reconsidered in January when the situation would be clearer.

The budget for the three Committees as proposed were as follows:

|                                         |             |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------|
| Finance and General Purposes Committee: | £99,525.00  |
| Environment and Amenities Committee:    | £44,570.00  |
| Planning and Traffic Committee          | £10,200.00  |
| Overall Budget                          | £154,295.00 |

The RFO would prepare a full budget paper for the January meetings of the F&GP Committee and Full Council, at which Members would consider the full financial position, including current funds and income so that the amount needed to fund the budget and cover the reserves could be determined. It was **AGREED** that for the F&GP meeting on 26 November two separate budgets should be shown – one with costs associated with Denmans Court and the other without.

### 11. STAFFING MATTERS.

- 11.1 Staff Appraisals. Staff Appraisals had been planned for April, but with the change of Deputy Clerks it was considered to be inappropriate and these would be carried out in the New Year. It was noted that the purpose of Staff Appraisals was to identify training needs and set objectives. The Clerk's objective of achieving CiLCA had not yet been achieved and it was agreed that she should be supported in blocking out time to put together the portfolio before the registration period expired.
- 11.2 Workload. It was noted that a lot of the issues previously minuted had been dealt with. As stated in Minute 7 individual and groups of Councillors had taken responsibility for assisting the Clerks with several functions and progress had been made in all of these areas. It was **AGREED** to add Cllr. Henton's name to the group responsible for Insurance matters and Cllr. Nicolle to support Cllr. Allen with liaison with the Police. The draft Emergency Plan was to be put before the next meeting of the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee. The Chairman commented that, from what he had heard at training and networking events, this Council conducted itself properly.

### 12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other items of business were raised.

This part of the meeting concluded at 10.38 a.m.

There followed a further period of 15 minutes for questions / comments from members of the public.

- Mr. Kerslake commented that he would not disagree that the Council was well run, but it must strive to be better, which could only be achieved by benchmarking against other Councils to identify good practice.
- Regarding the lease, Mr. Kerslake agreed that the Council should be firm. The Council would be a low risk and therefore a "blue chip" tenant. During the present economic situation the Council was in a strong negotiating position and should endeavour to get value for money.

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- Mr. Kerslake stated that the Council should be encouraging local organisations to apply for grant funding from the Council and suggested that the Grants Panel should be asked to examine the way the Council communicated the availability of grant money so that applicants could be encouraged. He also stated that this budget item should be increased to £2,000.00.
13. The following item related to staff matters and therefore it was **MOVED** and **RESOLVED** under Standing Order 35 (A) "that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw".

The confidential part of the meeting began at 10.43 p.m.

14. **STAFFING MATTERS: WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PARTICULARS OF EMPLOYMENT**

Two minor amendments to the RFO's Statement were **AGREED** for recommendation to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The meeting ended at 10.45 a.m.