

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2011** at the King Edward Hall, Lindfield.

Present: Mr. S. Henton (Chairman)
Mr. M. Allen
Mr. M. Amor
Mr. W. Blunden
Mr. L. Corp (Vice Chairman)
Mr. A. Gomme

Also Present 1 member of the public

In attendance: Mrs. S. Koliën (RFO)

The Chairman opened the meeting at 8.00 p.m. and welcomed those present. He announced the emergency procedures for the King Edward Hall.

40. TO ACCEPT APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

40.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Plass and Upton and the reasons were accepted.

41. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY ITEM ON THE AGENDA.

41.1 Cllr. Allen declared a personal interest in any matters pertaining to the school.

42. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

42.1 Budget. Mr. N. Kerslake suggested that, in view of the current economic climate, the Parish Council should considering reducing its budget for 2012/13 by at least 10%. The Chairman responded that he took the point that was being made and it would be part of the overall debate on the budget.

42.2 Parish Accommodation. In answer to a query, the Chairman confirmed that the meeting would include a report on the Office Working Party.

43. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN THE MINUTES AND CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 JULY 2011

43.1 The Chairman called for approval of the Minutes and of the Confidential Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 21 July 2011. These were **AGREED** and the Chairman **SIGNED** the Minutes and the Confidential Minutes as a true record of that meeting.

44. ACTION LIST / PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT

44.1 The list of actions was **NOTED**. The Chairman highlighted the following points:

Minute 30.2 – Internal Auditor’s report. Arising from discussion, the RFO was asked to produce a separate report showing income. This was now being done and was part of the monthly financial report to members.

Minute 34.1 - Standing Orders. A working document has been put together and circulated to members of the Working Group as a starting point for consideration.

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Full Council Minute 61.4 – Parish Accommodation. The Chairman reported that the Parish Office Accommodation Working Group had met. It had set itself specific tasks and a full report would be made once concrete proposals were agreed.

44.2 Cllr. Corp requested that the Committee be more explicit on the following:

Minute 130 (20.05.08.) – Backlog. **AGREED** that responsibility for sorting out old papers be linked to the Parish Office Accommodation Working Group.

Minute 389.1 – Direct Debits. The Clerk be asked to clarify in what way these would be looked at during Internal Control Inspection. At present Standing Orders and Direct Debits were reviewed at the beginning of each financial year by full Council.

Minute 29.4 – Budget. Could the Committee be more specific on how they would look into the question of allocation budgets across time period, with consideration of cost/benefit. Cllr. Allen put forward suggestions as to how this might be achieved and there was a short discussion on this issue.

45. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

45.1 The Chairman had no announcements to make.

46. GRANTS AND DONATIONS:

46.1 Victim Support. Although this had become a perennial request, this was an organisation which helped local residents. Cllrs. Allen and Gomme reported that it met the criteria and recommended a grant of £50. **RESOLVED** that the Council, in accordance with its powers under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, should incur the following expenditure, which, in the opinion of the Council, is in the interests of the area or its inhabitants and will benefit them in a manner commensurate with the expenditure: a grant of £50 towards the work of Victim Support.

47. BUDGET 2011/12.

47.1 Finance and General Purposes Committee - to review payments made to 31.08.11. **NOTED** that the budget progress to the end of August shows that from a budget of £92,200.00 a total of £30,114.62 had been spent.

47.2 Analysis of Administration Budget to 31.08.11. **NOTED** that the breakdown for the Administration budget showed that to end of August, from a budget of £77,200.00 a total of £27,546.21 had been spent.

47.3 Overall Council Budget 2011/12: to review expenditure to 31.08.11. **NOTED** that the Finance and General Purposes Committee budget seemed to be pretty much on target. The next few months would see considerably more spending activity in the Environment and Amenities Committee budget.

48. BUDGET 2012/13.

48.1 **NOTED** that the Committees would be considering their budget requirements during the next round of meetings and these would be considered at the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee in November. This Committee would also consider its own budget requirements at that time. **NOTED** that the Chairman, Cllr. Corp and the RFO would review the overall budget requirement prior to the next meeting. There was further discussion on how this should be undertaken.

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49. AUDIT

- 49.1 Internal Auditor's report – update on Denmans Lane Allotment land status (F&GP 21.07.11 - Minute 30.2)
Cllr. Allen declared a personal interest, as a spouse of a plotholder. Cllr. Blunden declared a personal interest as a plotholder.

Before getting the Denmans Lane Allotments valued as recommended by the Internal Auditor, the Committee asked for confirmation that the Allotments were classed as Statutory Allotments. The Clerk had turned up a copy of the Officers' report to MSDC in 1997 recommending the transfer by deed of the allotments site to the Parish Council, throughout which the land was referred to as Statutory Allotments. The land was transferred to the Parish Council by way of a Deed subject to a covenant not to develop such land. **AGREED** that there was no requirement to get the land valued.

- 49.2 To receive and note the result of the external audit for the year ended 31 March 2011. **NOTED** the External Auditor's certificate and opinion relating to the accounts for 2010/11 which stated that there were no matters giving cause for concern. Following conversations with the RFO, the External Auditor had included suggestions as to how to deal with anomalies that had occurred as a result of including petty cash in the total figures.

- 49.3 Internal Auditor: to note meeting held with new Internal Auditor. The Chairman, Clerk and RFO had a very useful meeting with Mr. Peter Frost, the new Internal Auditor last Tuesday morning. He was given an overview of the Council, what it was responsible for, how the accounts were organised and the Council's system for internal control and review of the effectiveness of internal audit and control. It was agreed that he would make two visits annually, as the previous auditors did and the date for the first (interim) audit had been arranged for 2nd November.

- 49.4 To note and agree the Internal Audit Plan The audit plan provided by Mr. Frost was under two headings - Review of Book-Keeping and Review of Risk - and they appeared to be very thorough as well as easy to follow. **AGREED** to accept the audit plan, as provided by Mr. Frost.

50. TO CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING AND CONFERENCE EVENTS.

- 50.1 **NOTED** that six members and the Clerk were booked in for the SALC Legal and Finance Day on 12 October which was covering a number of subjects of current interest. The cost of this is £595 plus VAT in total.

NOTED that Cllr. Gomme was going to the Chairmanship Day on 26 November (£85 plus VAT).

There was also a Councillors Update session on 25 and 26 November. Members were requested to contact the Clerk if they wished to attend.

SALC had also arranged a Clerks' Networking Day on 15 November. **AGREED** to authorise one member of staff to attend.

AGREED that Councillor Blunden attend a half day session on Staff Appraisals being run by Action in Rural Sussex, who had specialist trainers in employment matters, at £45 plus VAT.

AGREED that a maximum of four members/staff should attend the annual Regional Conference at the Felbridge Hotel, run by the Society of Local Council Clerks. The cost was £65 per delegate for members and this price had always applied to Councillors as long as their Clerk was a member of SLCC

51. RISK MANAGEMENT.

- 51.1 The Environment and Amenities Committee had allocated members to oversee the risk assessments for the functions that came under that Committee's remit and it was suggested that the ones for the Finance and General

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Purposes Committee be shared out in the same way. The Clerk had broken these down into four main categories and it was **AGREED** that these be divided up as follows:

Parish Office: Cllrs. Corp, Gomme and Plass
Governance: Cllrs. Amor, Corp and Henton
Employees: Cllrs. Blunden, Henton and Upton
Other: Cllrs. Allen and Gomme

52. PARISH OFFICE: TO CONSIDER QUOTATIONS RECEIVED FOR REPLACEMENT GAS CENTRAL HEATING BOILER

52.1 Eight quotations had been received, all but two of which were under £3,000 excluding VAT, but there had not yet been an opportunity to discuss them with the Dry Cleaners. The Clerk had set the details from the quotes out in a spreadsheet to show the differences and would give a copy to the Dry Cleaners. **AGREED** that the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of Council and the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee be authorised to liaise with the Dry Cleaners in order to make a decision and place an order for a new boiler.

53. PUBLIC TOILETS ON THE COMMON: TO SET UP A PROJECT WORKING GROUP.

53.1 **AGREED** that a Working Group comprising Cllrs. Blunden, Henton and Plass be set up to drive this project.

54. PROVISION OF SCHOOL CROSSING PATROL: TO CONSIDER EMAIL DATED 09.09.11 FROM JULIE FINN, WSCC SCHOOL CROSSING PATROL MANAGER

54.1 Since the agenda went out, there had been another email from Julie Finn to inform that the review of the school crossing patrol in Lindfield had been brought forward. Cllr. Allen clarified where the 3 crossing points were located and provided some background to the current situation. **NOTED** that this review was taking place and that there was a need to be aware that if the site was not judged to meet the necessary criteria the Parish Council was likely to be approached again about funding this provision or helping to facilitate the recruitment of volunteers.

55. ANY OTHER BUSINESS, ARISING AFTER THE PREPARATION OF THIS AGENDA, WHICH THE CHAIRMAN AGREES TO TAKE AS URGENT. SUCH MATTERS WILL BE FOR NOTING OR DEFERRAL TO A FUTURE MEETING ONLY.

55.1 No matters were raised.

This part of the meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.

56. FURTHER PERIOD OF 15 MINUTES FOR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Mr. N. Kerslake wished to comment on a number of matters:

- Standing Orders. He hoped that serious consideration would be given to increasing the number required for a quorum.
- Allotments in Denmans Lane. It had always been known that these were Statutory Allotments, which would need permission from the Secretary of State if the land were to be sold.
- Budget. A thorough review of the Council's spending over the last five years needed to be undertaken.
- Parish Office. The Council had not demonstrated that it needed more space and had previously looked at properties that were out of its league.
- Public toilets on the Common. There was no point in setting up a Working Group as the District Council had already given as much information as it was going to. It would be better to tell the public that the Council were unable to provide toilets as it was not tenable to borrow money for this project.

The meeting ended at 8.55 p.m.