

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY 9 JULY 2015**, at the King Edward Hall, Lindfield.

The meeting began at 8.00 p.m.

Present:

Parish Councillors: Mr. S. Henton (Chairman)
Mr. M. Allen
Mr. W. Blunden
Mr. R. Plass (Vice Chairman)
Mr. S. Shortland

In attendance: Mrs C. Irwin (Clerk)
Mrs. T. Ely (Responsible Financial Officer)

Not present: Councillors Mr. A. Gomme and Mrs V. Upton.

The Chairman welcomed those present and announced the emergency procedure for the King Edward Hall.

23. APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE.

23.1 Apologies were received from Councillors Gomme and Upton and the reasons were accepted.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

24.1 There were no declarations of interest from Members in respect of any item on the Agenda.

25. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

25.1 There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

26. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 MAY 2015.

26.1 The Chairman called for approval of the Minutes and Confidential Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 28 May 2015. These were **AGREED** and the Chairman **SIGNED** the Minutes as being a true record of that meeting.

27. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

27.1 There were no Chairman's announcements.

28. ACTION LIST.

28.1 The Chairman enquired about the progress in obtaining a refrigerator for the office and the Clerk advised that this had now been purchased.

28.2 The Clerk advised that the replacement of the Loft Ladder is still outstanding. This matter is to be referred to later on in the agenda.

29. GRANTS AND DONATIONS.

29.1 Grant Budget. It was **NOTED**: The budget balance currently stood at £1,750.00 and not £1,500.00 as stated on the grants register.

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29.2 Councillor Allen reported on behalf of the Grants Panel who considered the following applications:

Grant request from St Peter & St James Hospice.

NOTED: St Peter and St James Hospice & Continuing Care Centre are a registered charity whose work benefits many local families. They were launching a 40th Anniversary Appeal to raise funds for the hospice's frontline community services.

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, was in the interests of the area or its inhabitants and would benefit them in a manner commensurate with the expenditure: a grant of £250 towards the work of St Peter & St James Hospice.

Grant Application – 2015 request from the West Sussex Mediation Service.

NOTED: The West Sussex Mediation Service have assisted eight families in Lindfield within the last 12 months. The registered charity had lost £15,000 worth of grant funding from West Sussex County Council for 2015/16, and were seeking further funding support from Lindfield Parish Council to help maintain their free service to local residents. Lindfield Parish Council was recognised, as a funder, in their Annual Report and on their website and via social media.

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, was in the interests of the area or its inhabitants and would benefit them in a manner commensurate with the expenditure: a grant of £100 towards the work of the West Sussex Mediation Service.

Grant Application request from the Open Spaces Society for their "Lost Commons Appeal"

NOTED: The panel had agreed not to include this request on the agenda as it was the Council's practice not to support individual campaigns by organisations to which the Council paid an annual membership subscription.

Letters of thanks received. A letter of thanks for grants made had been received from St Catherine's Hospice. A copy of their latest newsletter was also enclosed with the letter.

In response to a comment made by a Member, Councillor Allen agreed to speak to the organisers of the Lindfield Arts Festival about not acknowledging the Parish Council in the list of sponsors on a recent publicity card.

30. BUDGET 2015/2016 (Budget Progress Reports to 31 May 2015).

30.1 It was **NOTED** that the June 2015 budget reports should be completed in time for presentation to the Full Council meeting that is being held on 16th July 2015. The budget progress reports to 31.05.15 have been circulated.

30.2 Finance and General Purposes Committee - to review payments made to 31.05.15.

NOTED: That the F&GP Committee's budget progress to 31.05.15 showed that from a budget of £128,020, a total of £24,144 had been spent.

30.3 Analysis of Administration Budget to 31.05.15.

NOTED: That analysis of the Administration Budget showed that to 31.05.15, from the budget of £112,520, a total of £22,207 had been spent.

30.4 Overall Council Budget 2015 / 16: to review expenditure to 31.05.15.

NOTED:

- £25,375 had been spent from the total Environment and Amenities Committee budget of £75,400.
- Nothing had been spent from the total Planning and Traffic Committee budget of £200.00.
- From the overall budget total of £203,620 the total spent was £49,520.00.
- There had been no expenditure from the reserves to date.

31. TO AGREE RECOMMENDATION TO FULL COUNCIL ON THE APPOINTMENT OF THE INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR THE 2015/2016 FINANCIAL YEAR.

31.1 It was **NOTED** that this would be Peter Frost's fifth year and that Councils were now being advised to change their auditor every three years. However, in view of having a new RFO this year, it was **AGREED** that a recommendation be made to Full Council to appoint the existing auditor, Peter Frost, as Internal Auditor for the 2015/2016 financial year.

32. ARRANGEMENTS FOR REVIEW OF THE FINANCIAL RESERVES.

32.1 The Chairman stated that the figures shown as reserves in the budget progress report did not reflect the amount of cash in hand. A meeting of Chairmen of the three main committees had therefore been arranged for Monday, 13th July 2015 to review the sums allocated to the reserves. This would be reported straight to the Full Council meeting on 16th July 2015. It was **NOTED** that Financial Reg 4.9 states that "changes in earmarked reserves shall be approved by Council as part of the budgetary control process".

33. TO CONSIDER DRAFT PROCEDURES, FURTHER TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INTERNAL AUDITOR.

33.1 The Chairman reported that the Auditor's recommendations had been noted at the Annual Meeting of the Council and referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee for action.

Documented procedures for document receipt, circulation, response, handling and filing.

It was **NOTED**: This is still to follow. The Clerk would take this to Full Council.

The Chairman reported that the next two Draft Procedures had been circulated with the Agenda for consideration:

Documented procedures to deal with consultation requests.

This procedure sets out more or less the Council's existing practise, with the addition of a register would will be maintained and circulated with Full Council Agendas. As requested by Councillor Gomme, it was agreed to add a reference in the procedure to recording the date of receipt and the deadline for responses, which would be itemised on the register.

It was **AGREED** to recommend this procedure as amended to Full Council for approval.

Documented procedures for dealing with and monitoring grants or loans made or received.

This sets out the existing process.

It was **AGREED** to recommend this draft procedure to Full Council for approval.

34. PROPOSED PUBLIC CONVENIENCES ON THE COMMON.

34.1 The Chairman reported that members of the Working Group and the Clerk would be meeting David Harper, Pru Moore and hopefully Chris Coppens from MSDC on Wednesday, 15th July 2015 at 10.00am to discuss the way forward with this project.

35. PARISH OFFICE.

35.1 Update on Outstanding Matters.

- It was **NOTED** that Trojan Rose had confirmed they would carry out the repainting of the Clock Tower House roof during the summer.
- It was **NOTED** that the quotation received for the replacement loft ladder at a cost of £157.60 had been accepted, but the contractor had failed to respond. Another contractor had quoted £190.00 plus VAT. It was **AGREED** that the second quotation be authorised.
- It was **NOTED** that a small fridge had been purchased for a cost of £69.99 including VAT.

- It was **NOTED** that the Clerk had finally received a response from BT regarding telephone bills and a credit received of £570.00.

35.2 To consider a Report from the Clerk regarding Business Rates.

A report from the Clerk, circulated by email the previous day, was considered.

An approach had been made by Goodman Nash Ltd offering to negotiate, on a no-win-no-fee basis, a refund and a possible future saving on business rates for the ground floor of Clock Tower House. Goodman Nash Ltd would retain 35% of the sum recovered as their fee. This company had carried out similar work for a number of other Councils. Following consultation with the Chairman, the Clerk had provided Goodman Nash Ltd with details of business rates paid over the last few years. In the light of this information Goodman Nash Ltd estimated they could probably obtain a net refund of about £2,500.

It was **AGREED** to approve the recommendation to instruct Goodman Nash Ltd to negotiate a refund and possible future saving on the Parish Council's Business Rates for the ground floor of the Clock Tower House for a fee of 35% of the amount recovered.

36. TO CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING AND CONFERENCE EVENTS.

- 36.1 The Chairman reported that Councillors Hinze and Shortland had attended the new Councillor's sessions run by SALC and the RFO had attended a New Clerk's Day. The Clerk and RFO would be attending the annual seminar on Risk Assessment and Insurance run by the Local Council Advisory Service on Tuesday, 14th July 2015. The Committee had approved attendance at SSALC training events at the last meeting.

The above was **NOTED** and the Committee also confirmed their support and **NOTED** that the RFO would attend a Legal and Finance Day on 20th October 2015.

37. RISK MANAGEMENT (Standing Item).

- 37.1 It was **NOTED**: Nothing to report.

38. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

- 38.1 No other items of business were raised.

The meeting concluded at 8.23 p.m.