

## LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY 12 JANUARY 2012** 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  
Mr. R. Plass  
Mrs. V. Upton

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

**In attendance:** Mrs. C. Irwin (Clerk)  
Mrs. S. Koliën (RFO)

The Chairman opened the meeting at 8.00 p.m. and welcomed those present.

### **74. APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE.**

74.1 All Members of the Committee were present.

### **75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY ITEM ON THE AGENDA.**

75.1 There were no such declarations.

### **76. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.**

76.1 Mr. N. Kerslake pointed out a typing error on sheet 1 of the budget papers, stated that the E&A Committee's budget could be reduced and suggested using the unallocated funds from 2011/12 to partly fund the 2012/13 budget. He also commented on the report on archive storage (item 9 on the Agenda).

### **77. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2011.**

77.1 The Chairman called for approval of the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 24 November 2011. These were **AGREED** and the Chairman **SIGNED** the Minutes as being a true record of that meeting.

### **78. ACTION LIST.**

78.1 The Action List was **NOTED**.

- Minute 34.1 - work on the Standing Orders was progressing
- Minute 61.3 – the Chairman confirmed for the record that at a recent internal control inspection he had carried out a spot check on the Direct Debits, by reconciling the original authorisation, suppliers' statements and the bank statements.
- Minute 61.2 – work on the review of parish office accommodation had stalled but would be moved on early this year.

### **79. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

79.1 The Chairman had no announcements to make

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### 80. GRANTS AND DONATIONS:

- 80.1 Register of grants made to date. **NOTED** that £1,250 remained unspent out of the budget of £1,500 for the current financial year and the Committee was only scheduled to meet once more before 31 March.
- 80.2 Grant application received from the Lindfield Arts Festival. Councillor Allen reported that a letter had been received from the organisers of the Lindfield Arts Festival requesting a grant of £500 towards the working capital to take the event forward in 2012. As this was above the normal £250 limit, Councillors Allen and Gomme had reviewed the application against the Parish Council's grants and donations policy and circulated their report. The application met criteria and it was recommended that this request be supported.

**AGREED** to award a grant of £500 to the Lindfield Arts Festival towards the 2012 event (Section 145 LGA 1972).

- 80.2 Open Spaces Society - request for donations towards the campaign against the threat to green spaces. A circular to subscribers had been received, requesting donations towards the campaign against the threat to green spaces due to the new emerging planning policy. It was **AGREED** that this request should not be supported as it was not a specific request for a grant.

### 81. BUDGET 2011/12.

- 81.1 **NOTED** that the reports for December were not yet available. Members considered the reports up to 30 November 2011.
- 81.2 Finance and General Purposes Committee - to review payments made to 30.11.11. **NOTED** that the F&GP Committee's budget progress to 30 November 2011 showed that from a budget of £92,000, £56,161 had been spent.
- 81.3 Analysis of Administration Budget to 30.11.11. **NOTED** that the breakdown of the Administration budget showed that to the end of November 2011, from a budget of £77,200, a total of £47,664 had been spent. The Chairman drew attention to the sum of £2,415 paid in November for the new central heating boiler at the Parish Office. The owners of the adjoining property had paid the invoice for 50% of this amount..
- 81.4 Overall Council Budget 2011/12: to review expenditure to 30.11.11. **NOTED** that a total of £76,732 had been spent from the total budget of £225,500. £20,570 had been spent from the E&A Committee's budget of £73,100 plus a further £1,100 from outstanding projects and designated reserves.

### 82. REVIEW OF PARISH OFFICE ACCOMMODATION: PAPER BY CLLR. GOMME

- 82.1 Councillor Gomme introduced his paper which set out a summary of the present situation, alternative storage solutions and recommendations. He explained that it had been written with the aim of encouraging discussion. Without additional space the Council could possibly fall foul of the Office Shops and Railway Premises Act and he did not want to see a return to the situation where the upper floor of the office could not be used as an office. Councillors Gomme and Blunden had visited the Big Box Self Storage Centre in Burgess Hill to assess alternative accommodation and cost. A unit of 200 square feet would cost in the region of £390 per month and two would probably be needed. Within the Village there were no known alternative facilities. Electronic filing might be used more extensively in the future, but the back-scanning of old records would be expensive and require considerable effort on the part of the office staff in terms of sorting, physically preparing the papers for scanning and indexing etc.

Points raised during discussion included:

- it understood that the general view was that most people were proud of the Archive and that it should be retained locally, accepting the cost
- the current rented accommodation had not been acquired to house the Archive, although that was among the items stored there. A solution which would have provided a better and more accessible facility in accommodation close to the Parish Office had unfortunately been lost.

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- There were three elements to this: the Archive, the Council's own past paperwork and other items belonging to the Council. It was therefore true that unless all three elements could be fully resolved, the need for additional accommodation would continue.
- A group of Councillors had recently spoken to the Village Archivist and concluded that most requests for information from the Archive came from outside the Village.
- One Member was uncertain to what extent the Archivist's job differed from that of the County Records Office at Chichester.
- The Council should consider what arrangements would be made for the Archive at such time as the present Archivist gave up this role.
- The comparison with Big Box Self Storage was spurious as the room currently rented was not full.
- Councillors had formed a group to assist with the old paperwork but requested guidance on the legal requirements for retention of documents and records.
- On balance it was felt that continuing to rent additional space could be justified but that this should be reviewed more frequently than four yearly as recommended in Councillor Gomme's paper.
- It was noted that the Christmas lights were under review but that the electrical equipment stored by the Parish Council must be kept in a dry environment.

### 82.2 Recommendations:

- A That Lindfield Parish Council's Archives Storage Policy should be if at all possible to retain all the above items within the Village in dry and secure facilities while retaining easy access to such items by staff and the Village Archivist. It was **NOTED** that a report on the Archive from the Archivist in 2011 stated that as well as being used for individual enquiries, the Archive was well used for exhibitions by Village organisations and that over eight hundred school children had benefited from it. **AGREED** to continue consideration of the best accommodation for the Archive collection.
- B It is accepted that as there is little, if any, storage space available for rent within the village and to ensure that we get value for money, a comparison should be made with a quote for similar space in a Storage Centre located within Mid Sussex at least once every four years. **AGREED** that this review should take place but on an ongoing basis rather than every four years.
- C It is recommended that this policy should be reviewed at least once during every Council's term of office or every four years. **NOT SUPPORTED:** the review should be ongoing, not four yearly.
- D. In the event that enlarged premises are found for the Parish Office, then the need for off-site storage should be reconsidered. **AGREED**
- E. If recommendations A and B are accepted, then it is recommended that the storage space at Masters should be retained but that improvements within Masters should be made so that racking is provided for the old records and other items that would benefit from being in a dry environment should be moved from [their current location]. **AGREED.**

### 83. BUDGET 2012/13

83.1 Following discussion at the F&GP Committee meeting on 24 November 2011, the E&A and P&T Committees had re-examined their budget proposals. Sheets 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 from the original pack had been amended and circulated with a note from the RFO summarising the amendments made, which resulted in a proposed budget of £164,175 with a funding requirement of £151,216. Full Council would consider the Committees recommendations on the budget and precept at the meeting on 19 January and make the final decision on the budget for 2012/13 and the amount of the precept that would be required.

83.2 To consider and confirm the Finance and General Purposes Committee budget requirements 2012/13. The F&GP Committee's budget had been agreed at the meeting on 24 November and no amendments had been suggested

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since. **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** approval by Council of the F&GP Committee's budget, including the Administration breakdown, as set out in Sheets 2 and 3 of the budget papers.

82.3 To receive and consider recommendations from the Environment and Amenities Committee and Planning and Traffic Committee setting out their budget proposals for 2012 / 13. There was further discussion on specific E&A budget items and the P&T budget and reserve for Professional Fees. It was **AGREED** that these budgets, as set out in sheets 4 and 5, should go forward to Full Council with a recommendation for approval.

83.4 Reserves. Members reviewed the proposed designated reserves in detail and the following justifications for inclusion were **AGREED**:

- Sinking Fund – Denmans Lane £3,600: for periodic repairs and refit.
- New for 2012/13 – New Premises £20,000: the start of a fund to go towards legal and professional fees, moving in and fitting out new premises once found. Balance of purchase price to be covered by a loan.
- Election £3,121: contingency for the cost of a bye election and possible bill from MSDC for the last election.
- Street Lighting £3,605.28: contingency for possible remedial work in the future.
- Allotments £500: small reserve for unplanned work.
- Denmans Lane Lavatories – Maintenance Sinking Fund £5,000: a fund for future repairs and replacements.
- New for 2012/13 Capital Project, Lavatories on Common £30,000 and Sinking Fund £20,000: to build up a fund towards the cost of this project with the aim in a year or so that the balance would be able to be borne out of unallocated reserves.
- Repair / Maintenance of Community Assets – Sinking Fund £3,000: fund for Village street furniture
- Repair of King Edward Hall Clock £900: accumulated fund for future repairs
- Christmas Lights £2,100: to go towards reinstatement of the lights
- New for 2012/13 Professional Fees £10,000: together with £10,000 in the budget, a fund to cover professional fees should there be further applications for large developments and professional advice for the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan

No changes to the figures for the reserves were recommended.

The Chairman suggested that for future years a change of layout for the reserves in the paper circulated to Councillors be considered. He felt that it would be more easily understood if a total reserve figure was given (which in fact would be cash at bank) of which funds earmarked for specific projects i.e. Designated Reserves would then be deducted.

83.5 To consider and agree recommendations to Full Council on the Council's budget for 2012/13 and the precept requirement for 2012/13.

Budget. It was **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that the Council's budget for 2012/13 should be set at £164,175.

Precept. It was **NOTED** that a budget of £164,175 would give rise to a funding requirement of £151,216. The Chairman proposed that since the E&A budget included an element of rounding up, rather than trying to reduce that budget line by line, a figure of £6,216 should be taken out of the funding requirement which would give rise to a precept request of £145,000. After discussion and clarification of certain points It was **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that the precept requested from MSDC should be £145,000.

**84. TO CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING AND CONFERENCE EVENTS.**

84.1 There were no training events coming up for which there was a charge.

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### 85. RISK MANAGEMENT.

85.1 **NOTED** that the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee would be arranging to meet in the near future, prior to the insurance policy renewal date at the end of May, to check that the Council's insurance policy provided adequate cover for all relevant risks.

### 86. PARTNERSHIP/CLUSTER WORKING – TO NOTE DISCUSSIONS WITH HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL AND OFFICERS OF WSCC.

86.1 It was **NOTED** that discussions were taking place between Haywards Heath Town Council and WSCC Officers about developing partnership working for highway maintenance work with the intention of forming a cluster with neighbouring parishes.. A similar arrangement has worked very well in Burgess Hill for a number of years. It was understood that WSCC would pass to partners in the group a fixed amount that they would have otherwise have paid to their contractors for a set amount of work. The Councils in the cluster group would then arrange to deliver the service to at least the standard required of the WSCC contractor. Examples of services that could be delivered in this way included weed spraying, sign cleaning, grass cutting, roundabout maintenance and temporary pothole repair. The arrangements would appear to be cost neutral for Parish Councils in the partnership. Councillor Blunden and the Clerk would be meeting with Councillor Tim Farmer and the Town Clerk 16 January to talk about this further and would report to Full Council on 19 January.

### 87. TO CONFIRM PURCHASE OF COMPUTER DATA BACK-UP SOLUTION FROM VISION.

87.1 An automatic on-line back up system was now available through the Council's website provider, Vision. Backups would be carried out daily and the system was inexpensive and understood to be secure. The Clerk had provisionally signed up for the Vision system, subject to the Council's approval, at the SLCC Regional Conference in order to get a 20% discount. The cost of the Backup would be a one-off set up fee of £50 + VAT and thereafter £10 + VAT per month. An alternative product was displayed at the Conference which was considerably more expensive and more sophisticated than necessary for this Council's needs.

**AGREED** to confirm this purchase, subject to a satisfactory response to questions about security of the backed up files and access to them in the event of the Vision server being off line, or the company ceasing to trade.

### 88. LINDFIELD PARISH DIRECTORY AND YEAR BOOK: TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER REPORT ON 2012 EDITION.

88.1 The review of the 2012 edition as set out in the report was **NOTED** and the following recommendations were **AGREED**:

- to proceed with the 2013 Directory, with a concerted campaign to increase the advertising
- to stay with GC Publishing
- 3600 copies with 80 pages of text and advertisements, dark green cover, usual gold blocked logo and title, no ribbon.
- that the Clerks in consultation with the Editorial Group should continue to have delegated authority to make decisions on content and layout and to make a decision on increasing or decreasing the number of pages by one further block of eight page if necessary.
- no increase to the advertising rates
- to invite Lindfield Rural Parish Council to make a contribution on the same basis as previous years: 17% of the loss (income less cost of printing) plus £200 towards the administration and sundry costs, 17% being the approximate percentage of properties in Lindfield Rural Parish receiving directories over the total distribution.

### 89. 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.

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- 89.1 Fidelity Guarantee. The Internal Auditor had advised that the Council should increase the insurance cover for the Fidelity Guarantee as the balance in the bank at certain times of the year had exceeded the £250,000 limit. **NOTED:** the Clerk had been advised that the next category covered up to £500,000, which Zurich would cover free of charge until the renewal date and the additional annual charge would be £19.85 including tax. The Clerk would confirm this for the remainder of the current period and the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee would consider it along with the review of the policy prior to the renewal date in May.

### 90. FURTHER PERIOD OF 15 MINUTES FOR QUESTIONS / COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

- 90.1 Mr. N. Kerslake commented further on Parish Office accommodation and the budget and on the proposals for partnership working with WSCC and Haywards Heath Town Council, about which he expressed concerns.

The confidential part of the meeting began at 9.25 p.m.

### 91. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS.

- 91.1 As the following items concerned Staffing and other matters for which there was a need for confidentiality, it was **RESOLVED** in accordance with 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".

### 92. STAFFING MATTERS.

- 92.1 A matter relating to salary was discussed and agreed.
- 92.2 Matters relating to mileage claims were noted.

The meeting concluded at 9.35 p.m.