

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY 15 MARCH 2012** at the King Edward Hall, Lindfield.

Present: Mr. S. Henton (Chairman)
Mr. M. Allen
Mr. M. Amor
Mr. W. Blunden
Mr. R. Plass

Also present: 3 members of the public (2 until item 10 only)

In attendance: Mrs. C. Irwin

Absent : Mr. A. Gomme
Mrs. V. Upton

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

93. APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE.

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

94. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY ITEM ON THE AGENDA.

94.1 There were no such declarations.

95. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

95.1 Mr. N. Kerslake:

- draft Standing Orders: in Mr. Kerslake's view the Council's quorum should be set at one half of the total members and not one third.
- Grant application – Food Bank: Mr. Kerslake encouraged the Committee to support the Food Bank with a grant.

96. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 JANUARY 2012.

96.1 The Chairman moved an amendment to Minute 83.4 which had been brought to his attention by former Councillor Corp. It was **AGREED** that the second bullet point of Minute 83.4 should be amended to read:
New for 2012/13 – New Premises £20,000: the start of a fund to go towards a deposit on a property, legal and professional fees,.....”

The Minutes, as amended, and the Confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2012 were **AGREED** and **SIGNED** by the Chairman as being a true record of that meeting.

97. TO ELECT A VICE CHAIRMAN.

97.1 It was **NOTED** that there was currently no Vice Chairman for the Finance and General Purposes Committee, following the resignation of former Councillor Corp. As there were no further scheduled meetings of the Committee before the Annual Meeting of the Council, it was **AGREED** to defer election of a new Vice Chairman until the first meeting of the new Council year.

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98. ACTION LIST.

- 98.1 Minute 88.1 - Lindfield Parish Directory and Year Book – the invoice had been sent to Lindfield Rural PC for their contribution towards the diaries.

99. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

- 99.1 The Chairman had no announcements to make.

100. GRANTS AND DONATIONS:

- 100.1 Register of grants made to date. **NOTED** that £750 remained in the budget from a total of £1,500 and that this was the last meeting of the Committee during the current financial year.

- 100.2 Grant application: 4Sight (West Sussex Association for the Blind) . 4Sight was a fully registered medical and social welfare charity supporting blind and partially sighted people in West Sussex, including 29 from the Lindfield Parish. £30 of the £300 cost of helping one individual came from statutory funding; the rest was raised from grant making trusts, companies and the community. Councillor Allen reported that the Committee had already awarded £100 to this organisation during the current financial year and that the letter under consideration referred to 2012/13. However in 2010/11 the request from 4Sight had been deferred to 2011/12. It was agreed that a further donation should be made from the 2011/12 budget.

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 £100 towards the work of 4Sight (West Sussex Association for the Blind).

- 100.3 Grant application: Haywards Heath Food Bank. The Haywards Heath Food Bank had been established by a group of local volunteers for the purpose of providing emergency relief to people in crisis in the Haywards Heath, Lindfield and surrounding districts. Councillor Allen had conferred with Councillor Upton on this application as Councillor Gomme, who was the other Member of the Grants Panel, had a personal interest because a family member was involved in the Food Bank. Councillor Allen stated that this was one of the best applications he had seen. He had circulated a supporting paper, in accordance with the Council's policy because the amount requested exceeded the normal maximum of £250. He recommended that the Council should look at the first year's accounts when they became available. At the invitation of the Chairman, Barry Prior, a Trustee and a Member of the Food Bank Steering Group, provided an update on progress. Members agreed that this application met the Council's criteria and agreed to support the request in full.

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 £500 towards the work of the Haywards Heath Food Bank.

101. BUDGET 2011/12.

- 101.1 Finance and General Purposes Committee - to review payments made to 29.02.12. **NOTED** that the F&GP Committee's budget progress to 29 February 2012 showed that from a budget of £92,000, £76,100.44 had been spent.

- 101.2 Analysis of Administration Budget to 29.02.12. **NOTED** that the breakdown of the Administration budget showed that to the end of February 2012, from a budget of £77,200, a total of £66,153.48 had been spent.

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101.3 Overall Council Budget 2011/12: to review expenditure to 29.02.12. **NOTED** that a total of £107,617.39 had been spent from the total budget of £225,500. £31,516.95 had been spent from the E&A Committee's budget of £73,100 plus a further £2,137.74 from outstanding projects and designated reserves.

102. TO CONSIDER PURCHASE OF A SIMPLE DOCUMENT SCANNER FOR THE PARISH OFFICE.

102.1 **AGREED** to authorise the Clerk to purchase a document scanner for the Parish Office at an approximate cost of £75.

103. TO CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING AND CONFERENCE EVENTS.

103.1 **AGREED** to authorise bookings for the following SALC events:

- Localism Conference, 20 April: Councillors Blunden and Snowling, the RFO and Deputy Clerk.
- Councillors' Briefing, 28 April: Councillor Upton
- Clerks' Networking Day, 21 May: Clerk and Deputy Clerk

103.2 **NOTED:** other SALC training events that were scheduled, included:

- Councillors' Briefing, 22 September
- Clerks' Networking Day, 9 November
- Chairmanship and Councillors' Briefing, 17 November

104. RISK MANAGEMENT.

104.1 A meeting of the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee was due to be arranged in the near future to discuss the insurance renewal.

105. REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS

105.1 The Working Group tasked with the revision of the Standing Orders had liaised closely with the Clerk and RFO and the new Model Standing Orders issued by NALC had been examined in detail against the Council's existing Standing Orders. The format of the Model Standing Orders had changed somewhat from one which preceded it. In preparing the draft, the Working Group had followed the Model as far as possible, with relatively few changes to suit this Council's administration.

Members discussed the Standing Order regarding the Council's quorum for meetings. The Model Standing Order on the quorum was in bold text which it was not permitted to change. A quorum based on half the membership could cause problems when it was not possible for enough members to attend a meeting, or when members involved in other organisations had to declare an interest and withdraw from the discussion. It was recognised that if an important matter was on the agenda for a meeting with low attendance and time permitted, the item could be deferred. It was **AGREED** that there should be no variation from the Model Standing Order on the quorum.

It was **AGREED** that the draft Standing Orders should be presented to the next meeting of Full Council with a recommendation that they should be adopted. The draft would therefore be presented to Full Council on 22 March with a recommendation to approve it which would be moved and seconded and then stand adjourned until the next ordinary meeting of Council, in accordance with existing Standing Order 41 b.

106. PUBLIC TOILETS ON THE COMMON.

106.1 A letter, dated 17 February 2012, had been received from Chris Coppens (Property Lawyer and Deputy Monitoring Officer, MSDC) in reply to the Parish Council's request for a written statement of the technical process for obtaining approval for the proposed public toilets on the Common. Mr. Coppens had enclosed a set of forms and guidance notes for application to the Planning Inspectorate for consent to construct works on Common Land under the Commons Act 2006 Section 38.

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In his letter Mr. Coppens had drawn attention to a piece of land at West View which was owned by MSDC but not designated as Common land and would therefore only require planning permission and MSDC's consent as owner of the land. Members considered this site, but concluded that it was unlikely to be a suitable location for public toilets as it was somewhat remote from the road for surveillance so there was an increased risk of vandalism and anti-social behaviour. It was also pointed out that it was away from the main footfall of the Common.

The order to be followed had been set out by Mr. Coppens as follows:

1. Planning Permission (MSDC)
2. Manager's and Owner's consent (MSDC)
3. Commons Act 2006 section 38 consent (Secretary of State delegated to Planning Inspectorate).
4. If the necessary permissions were granted, MSDC would then have to grant a legal interest in the Common to the Parish Council in the form of a lease and as the Common was classified as public open space it would be necessary for MSDC to advertise its intention to grant such a lease under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

He had also advised that:

- All consents under 1 and 2 must be in place before application to Planning Inspectorate as only the works authorised by the Planning Inspector could be carried out.
- MSDC could assist with some of the information required in the application to the Planning Inspectorate but must remain impartial as the Scheme Manager.
- The Cricket Club might be able to put the Parish Council in touch with someone who could assist with the application to the Planning Inspectorate.
- He advised against a joint application with any of the sport clubs as the Planning Authority and the Planning Inspectorate were unlikely to be prepared to deal with a large application for a range of works, which could jeopardise the chance of success for the public toilets element of the application if other aspects were not considered to be acceptable.

It was **AGREED** by 4 votes to 1 that the Working Group should draw up a brief and approach a named agent to act as project manager during the period when applications for consent were being drawn up and submitted. The Councillor who voted against this did so because he was not in favour of taking this project forward.

107. 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.

107.1 No other items of business were raised.

This part of the meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.

108. FURTHER PERIOD FOR QUESTIONS / COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

108.1 Mr. N. Kerslake paid tribute to former Councillor Corp and hoped that members would consider processes and procedures when planning for expenditure.

The confidential part of the meeting began at 8.37 p.m.

109. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

109.1 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".

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110. LICENCE FEE 21 DENMANS LANE.

110.1 Licence 2012/13. It was **AGREED** to renew the licence for 2012/13 and the fee was confirmed.

111. LGPS CONTRIBUTION BANDINGS FOR 2012/13.

111.1 The revised banding thresholds, as provided by the Scheme Administrators, were reviewed. Members **NOTED** that there was no resultant change to the contribution rates applicable to Lindfield Parish Council staff members who were in the Local Government Pension Scheme.

112. LINDFIELD PARISH DIRECTORY AND YEAR BOOK.

112.1 The Clerk reported on changes regarding the printing company. It was **AGREED** to confirm the order with the newly formed co-operative and to review performance in January 2013.

113. STAFF APPRAISALS.

113.1 The Chairman reported that the Clerk's appraisal had taken place and arrangements for the Deputy Clerk's appraisal were in hand.

The meeting concluded at 8.50 p.m.