

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY 17 JULY 2014** at the King Edward Hall, Lindfield.

The meeting commenced at 8.00 p.m.]

Present:

Parish Councillors: Mr. R. Plass (Vice Chairman and Chairman of this meeting)
Mr. M. Allen
Mr. W. Blunden
Mr. R. Pickett
Mrs. V. Upton

In attendance: Mrs. C. Irwin (Clerk)

Not present: Councillors Mr. S. Henton (Chairman) and Mr. M. Amor.

In the absence of Councillor Henton, the Vice Chairman, Councillor Plass, took the chair for the meeting and welcomed those present.

379. APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE.

379.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Henton and the reasons were accepted.

380. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

380.1 There were no declarations of interest from Members in respect of any items on the Agenda.

381. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

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

382. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 MAY 2014.

382.1 The Chairman called for approval of the Minutes and Confidential Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 22 May 2014. These were **AGREED** and the Chairman **SIGNED** the Minutes and Confidential Minutes as being a true record of that meeting.

383. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

383.1 There were no Chairman's announcements.

384. ACTION LIST.

384.1 The Action list was **NOTED** without comment.

385. GRANTS AND DONATIONS.

385.1 Grants budget: available funds. The balance in hand was shown on the register as £1,300, which included the deduction of £200 for the donation agreed at the last meeting for the Church bells project. The Chairman of Council had stated his intention of adding a further sum of £300 to the project from his Chairman's Fund. It was **NOTED** that there was some disappointment among Members about this low figure of £200 and at Full Council on 10 July Councillor Snowling had indicated that he intended to put forward a proposal for a higher amount, with a supporting paper according to the grants policy, for consideration at the next F&GP meeting on 25 September. As it had become evident soon after the May meeting that this would be raised again, the RFO had not yet sent the cheque, pending further discussion. It was **AGREED** to **CONFIRM** that payment should be deferred until further discussion had taken place.

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It was understood that Councillor Snowling would be proposing that this be treated separately from the usual type of grant with the virement of the funds from a budget heading other than the grants and donations budget. No further expenditure was anticipated from the sinking fund for the Denmans Lane office and it was **AGREED** that the money could be taken from that budget heading. It was **NOTED** that under the new Financial Regulations, which were to be presented to the next Council meeting for adoption, virements should have the approval of Council. As the next Full Council meeting preceded the next F&GP meeting, to avoid further delay, it was **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that it should consider, without prejudice, the provisional advance authorisation for virement of the appropriate sum from the Denmans Lane sinking fund, if it should be required, subject to any decision made at the subsequent F&GP meeting to award a more substantial grant towards the bells project.

385.2 Grant request from the Queen Alexandra Hospital Home. This was one of the oldest military charities, formed in 1919 to care for the wounded returning from the First World War. As there was no evidence of current benefit to Lindfield residents, it was **AGREED** that this application should not be supported.

385.3 Grant request from a Young Leader, 1st Lindfield Scouts: World Scout Jamboree, Japan 2015. This request had come from Miss H for sponsorship towards the costs of attending the 23rd World Scout Jamboree in Japan in 2015. A proportion of the money raised would go towards the cost of sending scouts to the Jamboree from poorer countries.

Members expressed admiration for this initiative but it was **AGREED** that the request could not be supported because funding scouts from poorer countries was contrary to Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, under which expenditure could only be incurred for purposes within the UK. It would therefore be unlawful for a council to contribute to a charity or a public service body operating overseas or to a fund established to help persons outside the UK.

Because S137 stated that expenditure must benefit all or some of the inhabitants of the Council's area and be commensurate with the expenditure being incurred, grants could not be given under this power to individuals. It was suggested that the reply to Miss H should make the offer of a free stall on Christmas Festival Night to help with fundraising.

It was **AGREED** that the Council's Grants Policy needed to be reviewed to give greater clarity on these issues.

385.4 1st Lindfield Scout Group: Scout Hut refurbishment (roof). The Scout Group was moving on to the second phase of refurbishment of the Scout Hut, which included replacement of the roof and upgrading toilets, kitchen and heating. It was **NOTED** that the Scouts needed to raise £50,000 in total for the refurbishment and that the Parish Council had donated £250 in 2013 towards the first phase. It was **AGREED** that this request should be supported with a grant of £250.

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 £250 towards the second phase of the refurbishment of the 1st Lindfield Scout Group's Scout Hut.

385.5 Letters of thanks received. **NOTED:** letters of thanks had been received from the West Sussex Mediation Service and Outset Youth Action, both for grants of £100 and from St Catherine's Hospice for a grant of £200 as agreed at the last meeting of the Committee.

386. BUDGET 2014/15.

386.1 The budget progress reports had been circulated.

386.2 Finance and General Purposes Committee - to review payments made to 30.06.14. **NOTED:** that the F&GP Committee's budget progress to 30.06.14 showed that from a budget of £123,020, a total of £32,215 had been spent.

386.3 Analysis of Administration Budget to 30.06.14. **NOTED:** that the breakdown of the Administration Budget showed that to 30.06.14, from the budget of £108,520, £29,477.46 had been spent.

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386.4 Overall Council Budget 2014 / 15: to review expenditure to 30.06.14. **NOTED:**

- £9,810 had been spent from the total Environment and Amenities Committee budget of £70,000.
- £18 had been spent from the total Planning and Traffic Committee budget of £40,200.
- From the overall budget total of £263,220 the total spent was £42,044.
- There had been no expenditure from the reserves to date.

387. REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS.

387.1 Standing Orders. The Clerk was preparing a chart to compare the new Model Standing Orders with the currently adopted version for discussion by the Working Group (Councillors Blunden and Plass). A draft would be presented to Full Council on 11 September for adoption. Councillor Allen offered to assist with proof-reading the Standing Orders.

387.2 Financial Regulations. The RFO had discussed the Financial Regulations with Councillors Henton and Allen and a draft had been circulated with the main points listed in a covering note. Some further minor amendments, mainly for consistency, had been made following a further proofing by Councillor Allen. The Draft Financial Regulations contained a number of threshold figures which required confirmation. These were **AGREED** as follows:

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| 1.14 | second bullet point | - "...approve any grant or a single commitment in excess of £5,000... " |
| 4.1 | first bullet point | - "...the council for all items over £5,000 ". |
| | second bullet point | - "...a duly delegated committee of the council for items of £1,000 ; or..." |
| | third bullet point | - "...the Clerk, in conjunction with Chairman of Council or Chairman of the appropriate committee, for any items below £1,000 ". |
| 4.5 | fifth line | - "...subject to a limit of £1,000. " |
| 5.5 | third line | - " Any Revenue or Capital Grant in excess of £5,000... " |
| 6.16 | second line | - "...restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £500... " |
| 6.19 | a | - " The RFO shall maintain a petty cash float of up to £250... " |
| 10.1 | third line | - " Orders exceeding £250 ... " |
| 11.1 | a (v) | - "...up to an estimated value of £500... " |

N.B. The figure of £60,000 in the following three paragraphs is £10,000 lower than the previously adopted Financial Regulations)

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| 11.1 | b | - " Where it is intended to enter into a contract exceeding £60,000 , in value..." |
| 11.1 | g | - "...contracts above £60,000 |
| 11.1 | h | - " When it is to enter into a contract of less than £60,000 , in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a) the Clerk or RFO shall obtain 3 quotations (priced descriptions) for the proposed supply where the value is below £3,000 and above £100 (<i>previously £5,000 and £1,000 respectively</i>). |
| 14.2 | last line | - "...tangible movable property does not exceed £250 " |

It was **AGREED** that the clean draft incorporating the thresholds agreed above, should be presented to the Council meeting on 11 September with a recommendation for approval.

388. PARISH OFFICE MATTERS.

388.1 Update on the sale of 6 Denmans Lane. It was **NOTED** that the contract had been received for signature. The Deputy Clerk had raised a query with the solicitor regarding a reference to an "attached" list of chattels which was not in fact attached.

RESOLVED: that following clarification of this minor point, the Clerk should sign and return the contract as soon as possible.

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388.2 Clock Tower House. It was **NOTED** that there were several outstanding works including the completion of the roof work and repair of the air conditioning units. It was also **NOTED** that because the design of the front door was such that unless it was locked it did not remain closed in windy weather and let rain in to the hallway. It was **AGREED** that arrangements should be made to have these matters dealt with.

389. PUBLIC TOILETS ON THE COMMON.

389.1 A meeting of the Working Group had been arranged to take place the following week to discuss the responses from Goulds to the list of points arising from the meeting with MSDC representatives and to consider the issues raised by Mr. Mackenzie during the public period at Full Council the previous week.

390. ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING AND CONFERENCE EVENTS.

390.1 NOTED AND CONFIRMED:

- SSALC Chairmen's Networking Day on 25 September (£60 plus VAT) – Chairman to attend.
- SSALC Clerks' Networking Day on 7 October (£60 plus VAT). As this was a Tuesday, when the office was open to the public, it was **AGREED** that unless the RFO was able to cover the office during open hours, the office should be closed to allow the Clerk and Deputy Clerk to attend.
- The Local Council Advisory Service Seminar on 23 September. **NOTED** that there was one free place with further places priced at £30 plus VAT.

391. MATTERS RAISED AT THE SSALC LEGAL AND FINANCE DAY.

391.1 The RFO had attended a recent Legal and Finance Training Day and had noted in a short report a number of matters that the Council needed to be aware of. The report was tabled. The main points included:

- Local Government Transparency Code 2014. Local Authorities must publish details of each individual item of expenditure exceeding £500 at least quarterly
- Planning Code or Protocol 2014. A copy of the Members' Planning Code of Good Practice was available as a download.
- Governance and Accountability for Local Councils. The Practitioner's Guide had been updated and a copy had been ordered. New regulations included:
 - Fixed asset register to be shown to Full Council every three months
 - Any overspend of budget must be agreed by Full Council before money is spent
 - The only accounting statement that the Council was required to produce was Part 1 of the Annual Return – anything else was as agreed by Council
 - It was not the duty of the Clerk or the RFO to draw up the Budget
 - New recommendation to provide a written explanation of variances over a specified amount, whether over or under budget
 - The new Model Financial Regulations did not have to be adopted but it was best practice to do so
 - Councils must approve entry into a "pooling" or "sweep" arrangement whereby the bank periodically aggregated the council's various balances via automatic transfers
- Electoral Process. A new guide to Parish Council elections was available on the Electoral Commission website. Changes included the requirement for nomination forms to be hand-delivered and the last time for withdrawal of nominations was 4p.m. on the day before the final date. Clerks would receive a supply of nomination forms etc.
- Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting following the election must be held between 15 and 25 May 2015.

392. RISK MANAGEMENT.

392.1 There was nothing to report under this item.

393. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

393.1 No other items of business were raised.

The meeting concluded at 8.42. p.m.