

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** meeting held on **Thursday 18 March 2010** at the King Edward Hall, Lindfield

Present: Rev. M. Davies (Chairman)
Mr. M. Allen
Mr. W. Blunden
Mr. A. Gomme
Mr. S. Henton
Mrs. M. Nicolle
Mrs. V. Upton
Mr. S. Willcox

Also present: 1 member of the public

In attendance: Mrs. C. Irwin (Parish Clerk)
Mrs. S. Kolien (Responsible Financial Officer)

The meeting commenced at 8.00 p.m.

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

354. TO ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

354.1 All members were present.

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

355.1 No declarations of interest were made. Councillor Allen stated that he may declare a personal interest in item 17 if it became apparent that this was necessary.

356. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

356.1 Council budget / projects. Mr. N. Kerslake stated that the Committee had steered an excellent budget through the Council in January. He added that because the Council and Committees only met bi-monthly, Members of Committees should be nominated to drive projects through to ensure that they came to fruition; otherwise the money would not be spent.

357. MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2010

357.1 The Chairman called for approval of the public Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 14 January 2010. It was **NOTED** that there was a typographical error in Minute 342.1 – the F&GP budget total should read £99,900 not £99,000 and the amendment was **AGREED**. The Minutes, as amended, were **AGREED** and the Chairman **SIGNED** the Minutes as a true record of that meeting. The Confidential Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 January were to be considered for approval during the confidential session.

358. ACTION LIST / PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT .

358.1 Minute 259 - Back up for Computer system. The Clerk reported that Mr. Irwin would be spending an afternoon the following week at the Parish Office to carry out a number of IT tasks including backup and reconfiguring the email arrangements so that the staff would each have a personal address.

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358.2 Minute 347.2 – Councillors’ Allowances. Further to the discussion at the last meeting of the Committee (at which Members had noted the statement in paragraph 5.2 of the Independent Panel’s report, which stated that the Panel was aware that several councils choose not to pay allowances but instead to reimburse specific expenses incurred on Council business) the Clerk had asked for clarification on this from Judith Morgan, MSDC’s Member Support Officer and from Trevor Leggo (SALC). Paragraph 5.2 referred to travel and subsistence expenses incurred on Council business which could be reimbursed to elected and co-opted Members and was treated separately from the Parish Basic Allowance. The only way members could receive payment for items such as paper and print cartridges etc was by claiming from their allowance, provided that the Council had agreed to make the basic allowance available. The basic allowance could not be claimed by co-opted members.

358.3 Minute 225.5 - Parish Office Survey. It was noted that no response had been received to the Parish Council’s letter of 8 January 2009 and the Clerk was instructed to write to the other party requesting a response by 30 April 2010.

359. CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

359.1 The Chairman had no announcements to make.

360. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

360.1 Request for a donation received from 4 Sight (West Sussex Association for the Blind). **NOTED:** £850 remained in the current year’s budget of £1,500. 4Sight was a fully registered medical and social welfare charity supporting blind and partially sighted people in West Sussex. Its services were designed to encourage confidence, independence and social inclusion following sight loss, helping people to stay in their own homes and retain their independence and dignity. Councillors Allen and Gomme reported that the Council had supported 4Sight previously. 4Sight benefited local people and met the criteria in the Grants Policy.

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.

360.2 Request for a grant, received from Holiday @ Home. Councillors Allen and Gomme reported that this request had been received following the article about the availability of grant funding in the January Newsletter. The organisation was made up of members of All Saints Church and was set up to provide three days of entertainment for elderly Lindfield residents who mainly lived alone and were unable to have a holiday. This work was of benefit to local people, met the criteria and was considered to be very worth while.

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 £200 towards the work of Holiday @ Home.

360.3 Request for a grant, received from Streetmate. Streetmate was a charitable initiative founded nine years previously by Churches Together in Haywards Heath and district and the national children’s charity Action for Children.. It identified and responded to the needs of young people aged between 11 and 25 living within Haywards Heath and the surrounding area. The core activity was detached youth work to meet, befriend and work with those young people found in the public spaces within the area. It worked with young people in Lindfield on a regular basis. Councillors Allen and Gomme reported that a donation had already been made to Streetmate during the current financial year and its representatives had been informed that the latest request may be deferred to the first meeting after 1 April. However it was recognised that Streetmate had not received any money from the Council during 2008/09, as their last application had arrived too late for consideration at the March 2009 F&GP meeting. As Streetmate had missed out on funding from the Parish Council in 2008/09 by slippage and as there was some

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money remaining in the budget, it was **AGREED** to make a further donation during the current financial year but it was to be made clear that this was an exceptional “one-off” gesture.

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 work of Streetmate.

- 360.4 Thank you letters received. **NOTED:** a letter of thanks from St. Catherine's Hospice for the £200 donated in January.
- 360.5 To consider whether to revise the Grants Policy to include provision for grants to be made in two tranches. Members considered a suggestion that the Grants Procedure should be more formalised with the Committee considering two batches of bids a year and inviting local organisations to apply. The Chairman stated that the Council had previously made a conscious decision not to adopt this approach, but to consider requests as they were received. He read out the relevant paragraphs of the policy:

- 6.1 *The Parish Council has not specified that all of those organisations/projects/individuals requiring grants or donations should make their bids to the Parish Council at a particular point/date in the financial year in order for the Parish Council to ensure that grants/donations do not, or would be unlikely to, exceed the overall annual budget for such expenditure.*
- 6.2 *The creation of the above “beauty parade” system for determining grants/donations allocation would be cumbersome. For instance, it would be administratively time consuming (e.g. sending out letters to potential bidders requesting applications to be made by a particular date, advertising the bid process in the local press etc); it would encourage bids (and perhaps higher than necessary individuals bids) from those who might otherwise not have made such a bid to the Parish Council (on the basis that if there is a set date for bids, “they had better get one into the Parish Council to be on the safe side”); and it would debar those organisations/projects who were not aware of such bidding (and would debar individuals because the Parish Council could have no idea who might want to make a bid on an individual basis), or did not see an advertisement in the local press, or who genuinely did not expect at an early stage to be needing to ask for a grant/donation.*
- 6.3 *Currently bids come in, uninvited as and when the organisation/project/individual feels the need to seek a grant/donation. As the Parish Council only makes small grants this process is deemed beneficial for smaller organisations/projects who may not be able to plan their financial needs so far in advance.*

During discussion, Members were generally against moving away from the policy in this respect and it was pointed out that inviting organisations to bid at two points in the year might well go against the principles of equality and diversity, excluding any organisations omitted from the circulation list. The sums concerned were relatively small, there would be an administrative cost in circulating to organisations twice a year and the suggestion would limit the groups, societies and charities to making applications at specific times when they might not require funding, or exclude them from making a request in between even though the need may arise.

RESOLVED: that the Grants and Donations Policy and Procedure should not be amended, but that the Council should advertise the availability of funding in its Newsletter (published in Lindfield Life) at strategic points in the year. Councillor Allen suggested publishing a feature on an organisation that had benefited from money from the Parish Council and it was **AGREED** that he should undertake research for a case study.

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361. FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE BUDGET 2009/10

361.1 To review payments made to date in 2009/10. **NOTED** that to 28 February 2010:

- The budget progress relating to the Finance and General Purposes Committee's budget showed that from the total budget of £99,900 a total of £77,786.83 has been spent. It was anticipated that most items would be within budget at the end of March. Members were reminded that any claims from their 2009/10 Councillors' Allowance should be submitted to the RFO within the next week.
- From the overall Council budget of £154,300, £95,349.22 had been spent.
- From the outstanding projects total of £22,441.10, £8,096.50 had been spent.
- From the General and Designated Reserves of of the £75,069.66, £26,202.34 had been spent.

361.2 Analysis of Administration Budget. **NOTED:** that from £77,650.00, in the Administration budget, £57,095.57 had been spent as at 28 February 2010. In response to a Member's question the RFO explained that the variance on National Insurance and Pension was mainly due to the contingency for staff sickness being added to these items in the current year's spreadsheet, which had inflated the figures. The contingency in the coming year's budget was included in the General Reserve rather than the Salaries NIC and Pension budget headings. It was **AGREED** that the budget heading "Sinking Fund – Denmans Lane", which was intended to cover unforeseen expenditure on the Parish Office, should be renamed for clarity.

361.3 To confirm the purchase of a new cupboard for secure storage of financial documents and an office desk and drawer pedestal for the RFO. **RESOLVED** to give retrospective approval for the purchase of a cupboard, desk and drawer pedestal (£369.97 plus VAT).

361.4 To consider the purchase of a new laser printer. **NOTED** that neither of the Parish Office printers was functioning reliably. **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the purchase of a new laser printer.

362. REPORT FROM THE INTERNAL AUDITORS

362.1 The Internal Auditors had submitted their Report from their recent inspection. The RFO circulated a note of explanation with the copy of the Report.

- Mileage allowance. **NOTED:** mileage claims above 40p a mile were subject to Tax.
- VAT reclamation. It was understood that there was an upper limit of £7,500 on the amount of VAT that Councils not registered for VAT could reclaim in a year. Confirmation was to be sought on this.
- Contractors' Insurance and Health and safety policies. The Auditors had recommended that these should be checked and this was to be done.

363. TO CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING AND CONFERENCE EVENTS

363.1 **AGREED:**

- SALC Clerks Networking Day – Smallfield, 26 March (£45 plus VAT per delegate) – Clerk and Deputy Clerk
- "Working with Your Council" (2 days - £160) – Society of Local Council Clerks, Haselmere 4 April and 12 May – Deputy Clerk
- SALC Legal and Finance Day – 22 June, Battle. RFO and Councillor Henton.

NOTED:

- MSDC / Mid Sussex Association of Local Councils Conference – 9 April at Clair Hall.
- 19 May – Mid Sussex Partnership Conference – East Grinstead.

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364. ADMINISTRATION SUB COMMITTEE:

- 364.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2010. **AGREED** to receive the Minutes of the Administration Sub Committee held on 7 January 2010. Receipt of the Confidential Minutes was deferred to the Confidential session at the end of the meeting. Councillor Blunden had nothing further to report pursuant to the Minutes.

365 INSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT SUB COMMITTEE

- 365.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee held on 10 March 2010. **AGREED** to receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee held on 10 March.
- 365.2 Report by Chairman of the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee. Councillor Gomme reported that the Sub Committee had considered Risk Management, the Insurance Policy and the Emergency Plan. It had been noted that there were two Risk Management systems running concurrently and a decision would have to be made as to which to carry forward. The Clerk had been asked to get clarification from Zurich about certain issues, including cover for volunteers. The Sub Committee had not recommended getting quotations from other insurers, but by chance the Clerk had since been approached by a broker who had suggested to the Council another major insurer. Members therefore **AGREED** that further quotations should be obtained and that these should be considered at the meeting of the Sub Committee on 28 April. F&GP would then consider the recommendations of the Sub Committee on 20 May, in time for the policy renewal date of 27 May.

366. RISK MANAGEMENT FOR F&GP FUNCTIONS.

- 366.1 The Clerk had made copies of printouts from the LCRS programme for F&GP functions and it was suggested that Members divided these between them to check that they were complete, appropriate and to look at the scoring and frequency of ongoing reviews for each function. The functions fell into five main categories and Members agreed to allocate as follows:
- Personnel (Councillors Allen and Blunden)
 - Office accommodation (Councillors Gomme and Henton)
 - IT (Councillors Gomme and Willcox)
 - Council Meetings (governance/procedure) (Councillors Nicolle and Upton)
 - Finance (Councillors Davies and Henton)

367. COMMUNICATIONS FORUM

- 367.1 Notes of the meeting of the Communications Forum held on 2 March 2010. The notes of the meeting of the Communications Forum held on 2 March 2010 were **NOTED** and Councillor Gomme, Chairman of the Forum, reported that the main item discussed had related to the Lindfield Parish Directory and Year Book. It was noted that a new Secretary for the Forum had come forward.
- 367.2 Lindfield Parish Directory and Year Book. The delays encountered with the 2010 edition had not gone down well with members of the Forum, particularly as some people liked to have next year's diary available from mid summer. A suggestion had been made to separate the diary part (to be issued with Parish Council information only) from the directory of Lindfield businesses and organisations. The diary could then be produced quickly and the directory could be issued at another time of year for convenience and by a different printer. It had been agreed that there should be consultation with residents and those organisations and businesses that contributed to the Directory content. The Forum had recommended that:
- a) a consultation should be arranged by the Forum in late Spring (late April/May) between representatives of the Parish Councils, the Preservation Society, schools, churches and other interested local organisations to undertake a thorough review of the publication of a Parish Directory and Year Book with or without a diary included and to make appropriate recommendations to the Parish Councils

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- b) that both Parish Councils be asked to raise the matter at their forthcoming Parish Meetings for the public to express their opinions for consideration at the consultation
- c) that the Secretary [of the Forum] write to the editor of "Lindfield Life" inviting public comment to be fed into the consultation process. This letter had already been sent to the Editor.

During discussion, Councillor Blunden observed that there was already a commercially produced directory. He also pointed out that without the Councillors and the Deputy Clerk, there were only two other people present at the Communications Forum meeting. The Forum had been set up when the predecessor to "Lindfield Life" could not be relied upon and the Lindfield Online website was out of date. The Forum had achieved a great deal, being instrumental in the launch of "Lindfield Life" and highlighting the need for a review of websites, but the time may have arrived for it to be discontinued as having done its job. Councillor Davies stated that this had been in mind at the meeting, but once raised, the matter of the Directory had to be discussed and from that, it appeared that the Forum's work was not yet done.

It was noted that the F&GP Committee on 14 January had agreed that the 2011 edition should go ahead as usual but that quotations should be obtained from other printers so any decisions arising from the consultation would not take effect until 2012. It was suggested that a consultation on the scale recommended by the Forum may be disproportionate in terms of time and cost, particularly as there was no indication of whether it was actually necessary. Consultation should therefore not proceed until the feedback from the letter in "Lindfield Life" had been received. It was also suggested that if the consultation did take place the words "with or without diary" should be omitted as it was a leading question.

AGREED that the consultation recommended by the Communications Forum should be postponed pending the response from the letter in the April edition of "Lindfield Life" and that it should be recommended to Full Council that the matter of the Directory be raised at the Parish Meeting.

The Clerk was asked to notify Lindfield Rural Parish Council of this decision as soon as possible as the next meeting of the Council was on 12 April.

Councillor Allen offered to distribute left over copies of the Directory to businesses who had not advertised to encourage them to do so.

368. LINDFIELD PARISH DIRECTORY AND YEAR BOOK 2010: UPDATE.

- 368.1 The Clerk reported that the income from advertising had come to £4435 for the 2010 edition. £1340 was still outstanding and the Deputy Clerk would be sending out reminders shortly. Councillor Allen offered to assist with debt collection.

The Clerk had written to GC Publishing and sent a letter and a diary to eight other printers inviting quotations for the 2011 edition which the Committee agreed to go ahead with at the last meeting.

369. TO CONFIRM RENEWAL OF LICENCE FOR 21 DENMANS LANE FOR 2010 -11

- 369.1 **NOTED:** the Committee was not being asked to agree an increase of the licence fee this year as the rent was fixed for three years from 2009. Councillor Allen abstained from voting on this matter. **RESOLVED** that the licence for the owners of 21 Denmans Lane to use of the strip of allotment land as garden should be renewed from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.

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370. 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.

370.1 No items of other business were raised.

This part of the meeting concluded at 9.20 p.m. There followed a further period for questions and comments from members of the public.

Parish Directory and Year Book. Mr. N. Kerslake supported retaining the Directory in its present format. He stated that if the consultation was carried out, the probable options should be set out, stating that there may well be others, and comment invited on preference. He also supported the view that a consultation should not go ahead without evidence that it was needed.

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

371. The following item related to Confidential Minutes and personnel issues and it was therefore **RESOLVED** under 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.”

372. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2010

The Chairman called for approval of the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 14 January 2010. These were **AGREED** and the Chairman **SIGNED** the Minutes as a true record of that meeting.

373. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE ADMINISTRATION SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 JANUARY 2010.

AGREED to receive the Confidential Minutes of the Administration Sub Committee held on 7 January 2010.

374 STAFFING ISSUES

374.1 Local Government Pension Scheme. An issue relating to contributions was noted and a recommendation relating to the scheme in general was agreed.

The meeting ended at 9.30 p.m.