

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2012** at the **King Edward Hall, Lindfield (Jubilee Room)** at **8.00 p.m.**

Present: Mr. R. Plass (Vice Chairman and Chairman for this meeting)
Mr. M. Allen
Mr. M. Amor
Mr. W. Blunden
Mr. A. Gomme
Mr. R. Pickett

In attendance: Mrs. C. Irwin (Clerk)
Mrs. S. Kolien (Responsible Financial Officer [RFO])

The meeting commenced at 8.00 p.m.

In the absence of Councillor Henton, the Vice Chariman of the Committee, Councillor Plass, chaired the meeting.

157. APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE.

187.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Henton and Upton and the reasons were accepted.

158. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

158.1 None declared.

159. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

159.1 There were no members of the public present.

160. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 JULY 2012

160.1 The Chairman called for approval of the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 19 July 2012. These were **AGREED** and the Chairman **SIGNED** the Minutes as being a true record of that meeting.

161. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

161.1 The Chairman made no announcements.

162. ACTION LIST.

162.1 The Action List was **NOTED**.

163. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

163.1 Register of grants. It was **NOTED** that the sum remaining in the budget for grants and donations was £1,400.00. Councillors Allen, Amor and Gomme reported on the following applications for financial support and their recommendations were considered.

163.2 Victim Support. Victim Support was a charity, independent of government and statutory bodies in the criminal justice system. Its members worked to support victims of crime in the community and witnessed in the courts. It was **NOTED** that the Parish Council had supported this charity over the years, although, because of the nature of

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the work, it was difficult to assess the level of support to the Lindfield Community. Councillors Allen, Gomme and Amor recommended a donation of £50.00. It was **AGREED** that this application should be supported.

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 £50 towards the work of Victim Support.

163.3 Open Spaces Society. It was **NOTED** that the Parish Council contributed towards the work of the Open Spaces Society by annual subscription and that this was one of their periodic requests for specific purposes, in this case to help set up a legal fund to assist members and local groups when fighting cases in courts. It was **AGREED** that this request should not be supported.

163.4 West Downs Neighbourhood Watch Search Team. The Volunteer Search Team had been set up in 2000 by Sussex Police as a response to the tragic abduction of Sarah Payne. The Team has proved to be a very valuable resource to Sussex Police. There were currently around 150 members who were trained to a high standard by Sussex Police specialist trainers and contributed a range of relevant skills. Volunteers were on call 24 hours, all year round. It was **AGREED** that it was a good thing to have a trained and equipped rescue team on call whenever needed and that a donation of £100 should be made.

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 the West Downs Neighbourhood Watch Search Team.

164. BUDGET 2012/13.

164.1 The budget reports to the end of August had been circulated.

164.2 Finance and General Purposes Committee - to review payments made to 31.08.12. **NOTED** that the F&GP Committee's budget progress to 31 August 2012 showed that from a total budget of £93,925.00, the sum of £31,904.60 had been spent. A further £2,072.50 had been spent on professional fees from the designated reserve for new premises.

164.3 Analysis of Administration budget to 31.08.12. **NOTED** that the Administration budget breakdown to 31 August 2013 showed that from a total of £78,925.00 the sum of £28,931.79 had been spent.

164.4 Overall Council budget 2012 – 13: to review expenditure to 31.08.12. **NOTED:**

- The Environment and Amenities Committee had spent £18,652.04 from the in-year budget of £66,050.00 and a further £8,246.80 from the outstanding projects and reserves.
- The Planning and Traffic Committee had spent £194.00 under the miscellaneous heading on expenses arising from the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire.
- A total of £50,750.64 had been spent from the overall Council in-year budget of £170,175.00 for the period to 31 August and a further £10,319.30 from outstanding projects and designated reserves.

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165. BUDGET 2013/14: TO NOTE TIMETABLE AND TO CONSIDER CHANGE OF DATE FOR THE NOVEMBER F&GP MEETING.

- 165.1 **NOTED** that it would not be possible to consider the budget for the Finance and General Purposes Committee until the accommodation matter had been resolved. The Committee would therefore discuss its budget requirements and the overall budget at the next meeting.

As the RFO was unable to attend the scheduled meeting of the F&GP Committee on 22 November, it was **AGREED** that this meeting should be rearranged for Wednesday 14 November.

A decision had to be made on the Budget and Precept requirement by Full Council before the end of January 2013 in order to meet the deadline for notifying MSDC of the Precept requirement. The dates for meetings in 2013 had not yet been arranged but the F&GP Committee would meet in early to mid-January and Full Council would meet soon after that to agree the recommendations. In the meantime the Committees were to consider and agree their budget requirements and make recommendations to F&GP.

The revised timetable for setting the budget for 2013/14 would now be as follows:

- 4 October 2012 - Environment and Amenities Committee to discuss budget requirements
- 6 November 2012 - Planning and Traffic Committee to discuss budget requirements
- 14 November 2012 - Finance and General Purposes Committee to discuss and finalise its budget requirements for 2013 -14 and review the requirements of the Environment and Amenities Committee and the Planning and Traffic Committee.
- 6 December 2012 - Environment and Amenities Committee to finalise its budget requirements for 2013 – 14
- January 2013 - Finance and General Purposes Committee to consider the Draft Budget for 2013 - 14 (date to be arranged) and agree the final budget figures

- January 2013 - Full Council to agree the Budget and the Precept requirement for 2013 - 14 (date to be arranged)

166. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS: TO NOTE ADVICE THAT THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL REGULATIONS WILL HAVE TO BE REVISED TO ADDRESS FORTHCOMING CHANGES IN THE LAW RELATING TO SIGNATORIES.

- 166.1 **NOTED** that the RFO had reported as follows on a forthcoming change in the law, highlighted at the recent SALC Legal and Finance Day, which would have to be addressed when reviewing the Council's Financial Regulations:

"Repeal of S.150(5) of the Local Government Act 1972

This is the section which states "Every cheque or other order for the payment of money by a parish or community council shall be signed by two members of the council"

The Government is publishing a consultation on a Legislative Reform Order which could allow local councils to move to electronic banking, if they so wish. It is anticipated that this process will be completed in December 2012.

We do have a copy of the consultation model and responses have to be in by 28th September, but we have no comments at this stage. We will, however, work closely to the final document when it is produced.

Hopefully we shall receive further guidance from SALC in due course and this will be a matter for full debate at a future meeting of this Committee. Whilst our Financial Regulations are due to be reviewed, it would be sensible to await the outcome of the consultation before undertaking this task. Apart from reviewing the Financial Regulations, we will also have to look at Standing Orders, Risk Assessments,

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Internal Controls and staff contracts. At a recent Legal and Finance Training Day it was indicated that this should be done by the end of March 2013”.

A copy of the notes from the Legal and Finance Day were available on request from the RFO.

It was recognised that this change would open opportunities but that the Council would be responsible for ensuring that adequate controls were put in place. On receipt of further guidance, the F&GP Committee Chairman or Vice Chairman would liaise with the RFO and the Clerk to write a paper for consideration by the Committee.

167. EXTERNAL AUDITOR: TO NOTE THE APPOINTMENT OF LITTLEJOHN LLP TO AUDIT THE ANNUAL RETURN FOR FIVE YEARS FROM 2012/13.

167.1 **NOTED:** that the appointment of Littlejohn LLP as the Council’s External Auditors for the next five years had been confirmed.

168. TO CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING AND CONFERENCE EVENTS.

168.1 **AGREED** to **CONFIRM** attendance for those who wished to attend the following SALC training and update events:

- Clerks’ Networking Day on 9 November (Clerk and Deputy Clerk) - £50.
- Councillors Briefing/ Update or Chairmanship training on 17 November - £87.50.

169. RISK MANAGEMENT.

169.1 Nothing reported.

170. PUBLIC TOILETS ON THE COMMON: TO RECEIVE NOTES OF MEETING WITH MR. S. SMITH OF THE TREVOR PATRICK PARTNERSHIP HELD ON 8 AUGUST 2012 AND ANY FURTHER UPDATE.

170.1 The notes of the meeting held on 8 August 2012 were **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** . An estimate and indicative timetable from Mr. Smith was still awaited. Councillor Blunden offered to telephone Mr. Smith.

171. COUNCILLORS’ ALLOWANCES: TO CONSIDER RESPONSE REQUESTED BY MSDC ON CURRENT SCHEME PRIOR TO PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEMBERS’ ALLOWANCES PANEL

171.1 MSDC had invited Councillors’ views on the current scheme by the end of September to inform the Independent Panel when carrying out their review.

It was **AGREED** to pass on to MSDC that the current tax threshold for mileage claims was 45p a mile, not 40p as stated in the current scheme.

172. 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.

172.1 No other items of business were raised.

173. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS.

173.1 Although there were no members of the public present, it was **RESOLVED** that because the following items concerned staffing and commercially sensitive matters, the meeting should be closed to the public during discussion of those items.

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174. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 JULY 2012.

174.1 The Chairman called for approval of the Confidential Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 19 July 2013. These were **AGREED** and the Chairman **SIGNED** the Minutes as being a true record of that meeting.

175. STAFFING MATTERS.

175.1 A staffing matter was noted and discussed.

176. PARISH OFFICE ACCOMMODATION.

176.1 Matters relating to the purchase of the Clock Tower House were discussed.

The meeting concluded at 9.15 p.m.