

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY 29 September 2016**, at the King Edward Hall, Lindfield.

The meeting began at 8.00 p.m.

Present:

Parish Councillors: Mr. S. Henton (Chairman)
Mr. M. Allen
Mr. W. Blunden
Mr. R. Pickett
Mr. R. Plass (Vice Chairman)
Mr. S. Shortland
Mrs. V. Upton

In attendance: Mrs. C. Irwin (Clerk)
Mrs. T. Ely (RFO)

144. APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE.

144.1 All members were present.

145. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

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

146. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

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

147. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 July 2016.

147.1 The Chairman called for approval of the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 28 July 2016. These were **AGREED** and the Chairman **SIGNED** the Minutes and Confidential Minutes as being a true record of that meeting.

148. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

148.1 There were no Chairman's announcements.

149. ACTION LIST.

149.1 Minute Reference 21.1 Risk Management.

It was **NOTED** that a meeting was still to be arranged to consider risk management.

149.2 Minute Reference 123.1 Internal Audit/Controls.

It was **NOTED** that a review of the internal audit and existing accounting procedures was still to be arranged.

150. GRANTS AND DONATIONS.

150.1 Donation Request for Poppy Appeal 2016.

Councillor Blunden confirmed that a request for a donation for the Parish Council wreath had been received. It was **AGREED** that a donation of £50 should be made from the Chairman's Fund.

150.2 Grant budget.

It was **NOTED** that the budget for the current financial year was £2,000 and that the total spent to date was £700.00.

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150.3 Councillor Allen had reported on behalf of the Grants Panel as follows:

Grant request from Victim Support.

NOTED: Victim Support was a registered charity which provided essential work, supporting people in Sussex who have been affected by crime. A free and confidential service was offered to victims of crime which included their family, friends and anyone else affected, regardless of the crime that had been suffered, whenever it had happened and crimes that victims felt unable to report to the police. Victims receive information, emotional support and practical help. The Young Witness Service in Sussex is also in operation.

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 Victim Support.

150.4 Letters of thanks received.

No letters of thanks had been received.

151. BUDGET 2016/17.

151.1 The overall total expenditure to 31 August 2016 was £56,581, of which:

- £43,419 had been spent from the F&GP budget of £131,780, including £39,908 from the Administration budget total of £115,780.
- £13,111 had been spent from the E&A budget of £51,600.
- £50 had been spent from the P&T Miscellaneous budget of £200.
- A total of £56,581 had been spent from the Budget Total of £183,580.
- £1,341 had been spent from the General Reserve fund of £53,452.
- Nothing had been spent from the Designated Reserves fund.

152. BUDGET 2017/18: TO NOTE THE TIMETABLE FOR CONSIDERING AND APPROVING THE BUDGET FOR THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR.

152.1 The Clerk reminded the Committee that the Precept for the financial year 2017/18 had to be submitted to the MSDC by the end of January 2017. With this in mind it had been suggested that a meeting of the F&GP be held on 12 January 2017 followed by a Full Council meeting on 19 January 2017. The Committees needed to have drawn up their budget recommendations for consideration at the Finance and General Purposes on 8 December. A meeting of the Administration Sub Committee was to be arranged to consider this budget.

The above was **NOTED** and **AGREED**.

153. PROPOSED PUBLIC CONVENIENCES ON THE COMMON: TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LIAISON MEETING WITH MSDC OFFICERS ON 28 SEPTEMBER.

153.1 Councillor Blunden reported on behalf of the Working Group for the proposed public conveniences on the Common project, following the meeting on 28 September with David Harper, Business Unit Leader, Waste and Outdoor Services, and David Terry, Landscapes Contracts Manager, MSDC.

Mr. Harper and Mr. Terry had visited the proposed site after their meeting with the Chairman and Clerk on 24 February. A small group of residents had approached him who had expressed an interest in the report that had been published in 2004/5 by MSDC on public toilets in Mid Sussex. This had advised that the public toilets on Lindfield Common were no longer fit for purpose; and had taken into consideration reported drug use and the fact that Lindfield Village Day had used portable toilet hire.

It had been observed that footfall was concentrated towards the log car park and that the West View car park was under used. A suggestion had therefore been made that part of the log car park be considered as a suitable site on which to place the new public conveniences. This would also have the advantage of there being no impact on existing trees. Mr. Harper had recommended seeking an informal view from the Planning Department.

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The above was **NOTED** and it was **AGREED** to request an informal opinion from Planning Officers about this site, prior to proceeding with the design process.

154. LINDFIELD PARISH DIRECTORY: VERBAL UPDATE FROM CLERK ON PROGRESS WITH 2017 EDITION AND TO CONFIRM AN EDITORIAL DECISION TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PAGES.

- 154.1 The Clerk reported that the draft in respect of the 2017 edition of the Lindfield Parish Directory had nearly been completed. This year had seen a reduced number of 30 advertisers which had resulted in less income being received and therefore a reduced number of pages being required. It was suggested by the Clerk that members of the committee might wish to review the diary next year. General opinion supported the fact this was a valuable community benefit and that consideration should be given towards a measure by which to accommodate a shortfall in revenue in the future.

The above was **NOTED** and it was **AGREED** to reduce the number of pages being printed in the 2017 edition of the Lindfield Parish Directory.

155. REVIEW OF FINANCIAL PROCEDURES: REPORT FROM RFO ON RESEARCH INTO ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE.

- 155.1 It was **NOTED** that the RFO had visited Lindfield Rural Parish Council to view their computer finance system on 9 August 2016 and that a report had been circulated. The RFO reported that the current system involved the manual transfer of data from one spreadsheet to another, and that the process of reclaiming VAT was extremely laborious. The main disadvantages were that the current procedures were time consuming and open to human error. Switching to an accounting software package would help to mitigate these problems.

The Chairman reported that the current receipts and payments form of accounting might possibly have to be converted to an income and expenditure basis at the end of the financial year to comply with audit regulations. Current rules required bodies, where the gross income or expenditure for the year had exceeded the threshold of £200,000 for a period of three continuous years, to be reported on an income and expenditure basis from the third year onwards.

It was suggested that SSALC might be able to provide a list of recommended companies who specialise in providing software packages designed specifically for parish councils. The possibility of switching to internet banking had also been discussed.

The above was **NOTED** and after discussion it was **AGREED** that a small working party would be formed to review the possibility of switching from a manual accounting system to that of an accounting software package. This would include Councillors Henton and Plass, and the RFO.

- 155.2 The Chairman reported that with effect from 5 December 2016, Barclays Bank would be reducing gross interest rates on their Business Premium Account by 0.05%. This would result in a nil gross interest rate.

The above was **NOTED** and it was **AGREED** that Barclays Bank should be approached with a view to exploring alternative accounts that might be available.

156. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME: TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO REMAIN IN THE POOLING ARRANGEMENT.

- 156.1 The Chairman reported that information had been circulated in relation to pooling arrangements that would influence the Small Scheduled Bodies Pool, Academies Pool and Small Admitted Bodies Pool with regard to future funding of employers contributions towards the Local Government Pension Scheme. This had included background information on actuarial requirements regarding employer contribution rates and factors that would influence the pooling of small employers. Pooling risks and mitigations had been highlighted under the WSPF Preparation for 2016 Valuation. A draft copy of the West Sussex County Council Agreement had also been provided. Consideration was given towards the advantage of remaining in the pooling arrangement as this would help to minimise the risk of volatility in terms of the total level of contributions that would be received overall.

The above was **NOTED** and it was **AGREED** to remain in the pooling arrangement.

157. ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING AND CONFERENCE EVENTS.

- 157.1 It was **NOTED** that the Clerk and RFO would attend the SSALC Clerks' Networking Day on 1 November 2016.
- 157.2 It was **NOTED** that Councillors Blunden and Upton had attended the SSALC Chairs Networking Day on 27 September 2016.

Councillor Blunden had reported that the following matters of interest had been brought to their attention:

Council Tax Referendum Principles.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had published the Local Government Finance Settlement Technical Consultation which had included proposals regarding council tax referendum principles for local parish and town councils. The term referendum principles had referred to the requirement to hold a local referendum if the proposed council tax increase exceeded a set threshold; the consultation is considering setting the threshold at which the referendum principles would take effect for a rise in precept of 2% or £5 per year, whichever is higher, as currently applied to principal councils.

Health & Safety and Risk Management.

Presentations had been given on Health & Safety and Risk Assessment. A link reference would be circulated to all members.

158. RISK MANAGEMENT: TO NOTE THAT A RISK ASSESSMENT HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT FOR THE CLEANING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL.

- 158.1. It was **NOTED** that a risk assessment had been carried out for the cleaning of the Parish Council.

159. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

- 159.1 Councillor Blunden reported that the President of the Royal British Legion, Lindfield Branch, had contacted him and who had raised a query regarding whose responsibility it was to arrange public liability insurance in respect of the parade that was due to take place on Remembrance Sunday this year. On consideration members of the committee concluded that this should be the responsibility of the Royal British Legion given that the Parish Council was not involved with the organisation of the event, including arrangement of the road closure and submission of a risk assessment. This would mean that there would be no insurable interest on the part of the Parish Council to arrange public liability insurance.

The above was **NOTED** and it was **AGREED** that the Clerk would recommend a contact at MSDC with whom the Royal British Legion should speak to for advice.

The meeting concluded at 8.43 p.m.