

## LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** meeting held on **Thursday 14 January 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

**Also present:** 1 member of the public

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

The meeting commenced at 8.00 p.m.

### **332. WELCOME AND EMERGENCY ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

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

### **333. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

333.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Upton and Willcox and the reasons accepted.

### **334. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY ITEM ON THE AGENDA.**

334.1 No declarations of interest were made.

### **335. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.**

335.1 Severe weather. Mr. N. Kerslake paid tribute to the Chairman and Clerk for clearing pavements during the recent period of inclement weather and suggested that something should be put in the next newsletter. It was noted that the Deputy Clerk, RFO, Councillor Leach and Richard Powell had also cleared snow and spread salt during this time.

335.2 Budget. Mr. N. Kerslake commented on the budget proposals and stated that the Council should be careful not to reduce the precept on the basis of the figures presented as there would be the risk of having to raid the General Reserves. Mr. Kerslake felt that £30,000 was too low for the General Reserve, now that the budget was likely to be at least £154,000. At least £40,000 should be in the General Reserve or even as much as £80,000. Mr. Kerslake suggested that the Council should have sinking funds of £10,000 for the Denmans Lane public toilets and £5,000 for the replacement of Parish-owned street furniture due to unforeseen damage (in addition to the existing maintenance fund) and to start to build a fund for a new public toilet on the Common, starting with £10,000.

### **336. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2009.**

336.1 The Chairman called for approval of the Minutes and Confidential Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 26 November 2009. These were **AGREED** and the Chairman **SIGNED** the Minutes and Confidential Minutes as a true record of that meeting.

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### 337. ACTION LIST / PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT.

#### 337.1 NOTED:

- A meeting of the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee was to be arranged in time to report to the March F&GP and a review of the Risk Management process would be on the Agenda for that meeting.
- A simple spread sheet was now in use which formed the framework for the internal controls and on which the checks which had been carried out at each visit were recorded.

The Chairman commented that the list of items completed was encouraging.

### 338. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.

338.1 The Chairman had nothing to report other than relating to Agenda items.

### 339. TO NOTE THE REPORT OF THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR (MAZARS).

339.1 The External Auditor (Mazars) had completed the audit for the year ended 31 March 2009. The Auditor's certificate and opinion had been received and had been circulated with the Agenda. The Parish Council had been selected for an intermediate audit on this occasion, which meant that a considerable amount of additional information had had to be provided. The Auditor had been of the opinion that the information contained in the annual return was in accordance with the Audit Commission's requirements and no matters had come to his attention giving cause for concern that the relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.

339.2 The External Auditor had commented on a few minor matters which needed to be drawn to the attention of the Council, but which did not affect his opinion:

1. Council name omitted from Section 4
2. Petty Cash balance omitted from total cash balance (Section 1, Box 8) – noted by RFO.
3. Level of Fidelity Guarantee appeared relatively low and the Council may wish to review this – this had already been noted and would be taken up by the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee when conducting the review of the Insurance Policy.
4. Original documents (bank statements) not to be submitted in future years – noted by RFO.

339.3 The "Notice of Conclusion of the Audit and right to inspect the Annual Return" had been advertised, as required.

339.4 On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Mrs. Koliën, the Responsible Financial Officer, for all her efforts, particularly as the intermediate audit had entailed a lot more work. It was noted and acknowledged that no issues of any significance had been raised by the External Auditors during the fourteen and a half years that Mrs. Koliën had held the post of RFO.

### 340. REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERNAL AUDIT AND INTERNAL CONTROL PROCEDURES.

340.1 The Chairman stated that the report was in draft form and would be tidied up for presenting to Full Council on 21 January. It was noted that the periodic checks continued to be made by Cllrs. Davies and / or Cllrs. Willcox and Henton. A project or issue based check would be carried out at the next inspection.

**AGREED** to recommend to the Full Council to accept the report on the review of the effectiveness of the Internal Audit and Internal Control Procedures.

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### 341. GRANTS AND DONATIONS.

- 341.1 St Catherine's Hospice. Cllr. Allen declared a personal interest in this item as his wife was a member of the local fundraising committee for the Hospice. St. Catherine's Hospice was a well established local charity dedicated to providing end of life care to local people, as well as their families, friends and carers. Cllr. Gomme reported that the great work of St. Catherine's Hospice was well known locally and that hospices depended on grant funding as there was no financial support from Central Government.

**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 St. Catherine's Hospice.

### 342. FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE BUDGET (CURRENT YEAR)

- 342.1 To review payments made to date in 2009/10. **NOTED** that to 31 December 2009:

- The budget progress relating to the Finance and General Purposes Committee budget showed that from a budget of £99,000, a total of £61,139.82 had been spent. At three quarters of the way through the financial year, it was noted that most items were underspent against the budget figures.
- From the overall Council budget of £154,300, £81,342.62 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 £75,069.66, £24,137.85 had been spent.

- 342.2 Analysis of the Administration Budget. It was **NOTED** that from £77,650.00 in the Administration Budget, £47,597.32 had been spent as at 31 December 2009 and that the headings relating to salaries were the highest items of expense.

- 342.3 The Clerk had asked the Committee to consider retrospective approval of a wireless print server, at a cost of £69.75, which would allow the photocopier to be used as a printer from each of the office computers without any hard wiring. This had been supported by the Administration Sub Committee at the meeting on 7 January. This was **AGREED**.

### 343. TO CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING AND CONFERENCE EVENTS

- 343.1 **NOTED:**

- the Code of Conduct training at MSDC had been rearranged for Tuesday 9 February at 5.30. (no charge)
- SALC training events were taking place at Haselmere on Friday 26 and Saturday 27 February – approximate cost for each course (on a non residential basis) was £75 / 80, events included Councillors' Update, Chairmanship, a Power of Well Being Session and CiLCA Fast Track. It was noted that Councillors Upton and Snowling had recently attended Power of Well Being training sessions. The point was made that distance to such events could be off putting. It was **AGREED** that further notifications of Power of Well Being training should be forwarded only to Members who had still not attended a session.
- The Clerk reported that she was approximately half way through putting together the Portfolio for CiLCA. However her registration would expire on 25 January. It was **AGREED** to support the Clerk by paying the fee of £150 for re-registration and approximately £75 for a further CiLCA Fast Track session.
- Rural Health Workshop and Data Base Training at Scaynes Hill on 26 February – to be attended by Councillor Gomme as this was related to Parish Plans. (No charge).

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343.2 It was **AGREED** that the Clerk should liaise with Clerks of other nearby Councils with a view to arranging a Power of Well-Being training session locally.

### 344. ADMINISTRATION SUB COMMITTEE:

344.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 January were not yet available but the Chairman of the Sub Committee reported that the main item discussed was the lease for Denmans Court which was the next item on the Agenda.

### 345. TO CONSIDER ANY ISSUES RELATING TO ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATION AT DENMANS COURT

345.1 As the issue of valuations and terms of the lease were commercially sensitive, it was **AGREED** that discussion should be deferred to the confidential session.

345.2 Confirmation of Valuers' fee and to determine the budget heading from which the Valuer's and Solicitor's fees should be paid. It was **NOTED** that the fee for the valuation was £115 (including VAT) and it was **CONFIRMED** that this should be met and it was **AGREED** that the Valuer and the Solicitor should be paid from the General Reserve as there was no specific budget for this purpose.

### 346. RISK MANAGEMENT: UPDATE.

346.1 The Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee would be meeting within the next few weeks to review the risk management process and the insurance provision and would be making recommendations to the F&GP Committee at the meeting on 18 March..

### 347. COUNCILLORS ALLOWANCES

347.1 To note the report of the Independent Panel on the Review of Members' Allowances 2010/11. The regulations required that Parish Councils' decisions be taken with due regard to the recommendations of the Independent Panel. MSDC had issued the report of the Independent Panel, which in the light of the current economic circumstances was recommending that the allowances should remain at the current level with no increase in line with the Local Government Pay Settlement 2010 / 11.

It was **AGREED** recommend to Full Council to adopt the recommendations of the Independent Panel, according to the Electorate Banding set out in the report:

- Councillors' basic allowance £543,
- Chairman's enhanced Basic Allowance £814
- car mileage allowance 40p a mile

It was **NOTED** that these were the amounts to be made available to Members, but that it was for individual Members to decide whether or not to take all or part of their allowance.

347.2 It was **AGREED** to seek clarification of paragraph 5.2 of the report which stated: "the Panel was made aware that several of the Parish Councils choose not to pay allowances, but instead to reimburse specific expenses incurred on Council business....the Panel recognise that this is accepted practice and accountable through the Town and Parish Council's normal audit process" as this appeared to contradict the advice previously given.

347.3 Councillor Blunden requested that the Minutes should record that he had not claimed the full Chairman's enhanced allowance as implied by the Summary of Allowances paid by Town / Parish Councils 2009/10, at Appendix 3 of the report.

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### 348. REPORT ON THE LINDFIELD PARISH DIRECTORY AND YEAR BOOK 2010

348.1 The Clerk had circulated a report with recommendations for the 2011 edition. There had been some disappointment that the 2010 edition had been delivered very late and that there was a box of approximately 100 directories missing. However it was acknowledged that GC Publishing had consistently provided a quality product over a period of 17 years. Their Managing Director had explained that the delay had been due to the company changing their printers and that although there had been problems during the reorganisation, the result would mean a much improved service in future years. It was noted that feedback from residents had been very positive and they had been very understanding about the delay. It was noted that building was shortly to commence at the Newton Road site and additional directories would be required for the residents as the site may be occupied within the year. The approved site of 65 houses at Gravelly Lane / Lyoth Lane should also be catered for.

348.2 After some debate, it was **AGREED** that:

- The Council should produce a 2011 directory, with a concerted campaign to increase the advertising
- Quotations should be sought from three specialist diary printers, including GC publishing, and that it should be made clear in the specification that a guaranteed delivery date would be required.
- 3600 copies (an increase of 200) should be ordered to allow for new properties in Newton Road and Gravelly Lane.
- The format should remain unchanged but that the Clerks, in consultation with the Directory Working Group should be authorised to make decisions on content, layout and on increasing or decreasing the number of pages as necessary.
- The advertising rates should remain unchanged
- Lindfield Rural Parish Council should be invited to make a contribution towards the costs incurred, in proportion to the number of directories delivered in that Parish.

### 349. PAYROLL: TO CONSIDER WHETHER WSCC SHOULD BE REQUESTED TO PROVIDE A PAYROLL SERVICE (REPORT BY RFO)

349.1 Mrs. Koliën reported that with effect from April 2010, all payments to HM Revenue and Customs would have to be made electronically. This would mean that the monthly PAYE and NIC payments, hitherto paid by cheque at the Post Office would have to be paid electronically. However current legislation prevented Parish Councils from making electronic payments and although NALC and other organisations were working on a solution to this, it was envisaged that there would be some difficulties before this issue was resolved. The Clerk and Mrs. Koliën had discussed this and felt that this would be an appropriate time for the Parish Council to ask WSCC to provide a payroll service. Feedback from other councils making use of this service had been very positive. The initial set up cost was £25 per person and £5.34 per payslip per month. This service could be extended to Members should they decide to draw their full allowance and become liable for tax. A minor amendment to staff contracts would be required to change the date for salaries to be paid from 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> of the month.

**AGREED to RECOMMEND** to Full Council that with effect from 1 April 2010, WSCC be requested to provide a payroll service to Lindfield Parish Council at an initial set up cost of £25 per person (£75 in total) and thereafter at a cost of £5.34 per pay slip per month (£16.02 in total, per month). The costs to be taken from the Salaries" budget heading in the Administration Budget.

### 350. BUDGET FOR 2010/11

350.1 Members had all received a schedule of Papers which included:

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- Policy Paper and covering note from RFO
- Draft Budget 2010/11 and estimate of spending to 31.03.10. (Sheet 1)
- Breakdown of Finance and General Purposes Committee Budget (Sheet 2)
- Breakdown of Administration Budget (Sheet 3)
- Annotated breakdown of Environment and Amenities Committee Budget (Sheet 4)
- Extract from Minutes of Planning and Traffic Committee Meeting of 20 October 2009
- Anticipated Receipts to 31.03.10.
- Anticipated funds as at 31.03.10.
- Calculation re. funding of Budget Requirement

The main document for Members to look at was the draft budget itself. The rest was background information to answer any specific queries they may have.

- 350.2 Before considering the detailed budget proposal, Members discussed certain additional items and it was **AGREED** that provision should be made for the following:

### Environment and Amenities Budget:

- Additional grit bins and salt spreaders, the need for which had become evident during the recent period of severe winter weather (suggested £1,500 – E&A budget). It was acknowledged that the E&A Committee would have to debate the Parish Council's role in dealing with such situations, but that the F&GP Committee needed to make some provision to enable the Council to take appropriate action.

### Reserves

- Sinking fund for the Denmans Lane toilets, to cover unforeseen damage that may not be fully covered by the maintenance contracts or the insurance policy (suggested £5,000)
- New public toilet on the Common – to build a fund for capital works (suggested £10,000 / £20,000)
- Sinking fund for repair/maintenance of Council's assets (suggested £3,000)
- Reserve for additional emergency equipment (suggested £1,000)
- It was also **AGREED** that the General Reserve should be raised to a minimum of £50,000 in accordance with advice that this should be between a third and a half of the annual turnover. It was recognised for example that, should the Clerk become unfit for work for a period of time, the cost of a locum in addition to the Clerk's pay, would be considerable and this would be a drain on the reserves.

- 350.3 To consider requirement for the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The main increases were associated with the renting, setting up and maintenance of Denmans Court. The draft F&GP budget proposals as set out on Sheets 1 and 3 were **AGREED**.

- 350.4 To consider overall budget for Lindfield Parish Council. Having discussed and agreed that provision should be made for the additional items listed at Minute 350.2, it was **AGREED** that the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, the RFO and the Clerk should confer after the meeting to adjust and re-tabulate the figures for presentation to Full Council. It was also **AGREED** to recommend to Full Council that the budget for 2010/11 should be **£156,395**:

F&GP: £99,525.00  
E&A: £46,670.00  
P&T: £10,200.00

- 350.5 To consider precept requirement for 2010/11. It was **AGREED** to recommend to Full Council that the precept should stay the same as for 2009/10: **£158,246**.

## 351. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

- 351.1 No items of other business were raised.

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This part of the meeting concluded at 9.35 p.m.

There followed a further period for questions and comments from members of the public.

Budget. Mr. N. Kerslake commented that the debate on the budget had been very constructive. He believed that the recommendations to make no change to the precept, to increase the general reserve and to build new designated reserves were right. There would be enough funds to cover emergencies. If it proved to be impossible to go ahead with renting Denmans Court, the difference between the budgeted amount and the continued rental of space at Masters should go into a designated reserve as a starter fund for other additional accommodation which might become available. Mr. Kerslake felt that the grants budget ought to be increased to £2,500 or £3,000 and local organisations should be encouraged to bid for funds. Mr. Kerslake supported the budget provision for dealing with severe weather and suggested that the E&A Committee should set up a sub group to look at what might be needed for emerging situations such as severe weather and to produce a paper for consideration by the E&A Committee.

Councillors' Allowances. Mr. Kerslake supported the view that the points raised at Minutes 347.2 and 347.3 should be challenged.

**352.** It had been agreed at Minute 345.1 that the items relating to Denmans Court were commercially sensitive and it was therefore **RESOLVED** under Standing Order no. 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".

### **353. DENMANS COURT**

353.1 Consideration of valuations and update on the lease of the premises. Two valuations had been obtained and were noted.

353.2 Update on the lease. The latest advice from the Council's Solicitor regarding the terms of the lease was noted.

353.3 To agree a recommendation to Full Council on whether to continue negotiations. Having considered the advice of two valuers and noted the latest advice from the Council's solicitor regarding the terms of the lease, it was **AGREED** to continue with negotiations and report any progress to Full Council on 21 January.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 10.00 p.m.