

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on Thursday 23 July 2009 at the King Edward Hall, Lindfield.

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

Also present: Cllr. Mr. S. Henton
Cllr. Mrs. C. Field (WSCC)
1 member of the public
Mr. P. Hemsley (Deputy Parish Clerk)

In attendance: Mrs. C. Irwin (Parish Clerk)

The meeting commenced at 8.00 p.m.

274. WELCOME AND EMERGENCY ANNOUNCEMENTS.

274.1 The Chairman welcomed all those present, in particular Cllr. Mrs. Field and Mr. Hemsley, and invited Cllr. Field to report on any matters of interest as she would be unable to attend Full Council on 27 August.

274.2 Cllr. Mrs. Field reported on the meeting of the Central Mid Sussex County Local Committee (CLC) which had been held the previous day:

- A grant of £2,500 had been agreed for the weatherboarding at the King Edward Hall
- There was to be a re-statement of the CLC's terms and conditions for grant making at the September meeting of the CLC
- It had been agreed that the proposals for revision of the waiting restrictions in Denmans Lane would be re-advertised prior to the September meeting of the CLC to include changes to the previous proposals which would now allow continued unrestricted parking between Compton Road and the barrier.

275. TO ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

275.1 Apologies were received from Cllrs. Willcox and Nicolle and the reasons accepted.

276. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY ITEM ON THE AGENDA.

276.1 There were no declarations of interest.

277. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC. (MAXIMUM 15 MINUTES).

277.1 Additional Accommodation. Mr. Kerslake commented on the way this item had been discussed in confidential session over a long period, without the public being made aware of the details. When discussion had taken place regarding the existing Parish Office, the only items that had been treated in confidential session had been the price and the negotiations with the Estate Agent. Mr. Kerslake was disappointed that there was so little information in the public domain.

278. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 MAY 2009

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- 278.1 The Chairman called for approval of the Minutes and Confidential Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 28 May 2009. These were AGREED and the Chairman SIGNED the Minutes and Confidential Minutes as a true record of that meeting.
279. ACTION LIST / PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT.
- 279.1 Website. It was noted that the new Parish Council Website should become live on 1 August. This would continue to be a work-in-progress. It was AGREED that a letter should be sent to Mrs. Beesley of Cipherweb thanking her for all she had done on behalf of the Parish Council and for Lindfield in general, through Lindfield Online, and to request that Lindfield Online be removed as the new Parish Council site contained a Community Section.
- 279.2 Insurance. The insurance cover had been increased by Zurich as requested.
- 279.3 Disciplinary Procedure. It was noted that the disciplinary procedure was still outstanding, because of the need to prioritise work and to obtain advice on the latest guidance.
- 279.4 Back up for computers. AGREED that this needed to be progressed.
280. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.
- 280.1 The Chairman had nothing to report in addition to the Agenda items.
281. GRANTS AND DONATIONS.
- 281.1 Advertisement in Lindfield Bonfire Society Programme. Councillor Blunden abstained from voting on this item because of his connection with the Bonfire Society. This was not in the strict sense, a request for a donation and in effect the Parish Council would be buying a service by advertising in the Programme, but would be doing so to support a Village organisation. The Parish Council regularly advertised both in this and the Village Day Programmes and it was AGREED that the Parish Council should take a quarter page advertisement in the Bonfire Society Programme, which would cost £45.
282. FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE BUDGET
- 292.1 To review payments made in 2008/09. It was NOTED that the year end accounts for 2008/09 had not been finalised when the Committee last met, but the accounts had now been approved by Full Council and the final budget analysis had been circulated, showing that the F&GP budget was overspent by £7,698.23. There had been a discrepancy of £9.20 which had now been resolved. It was noted that the date for completion of the Accounts and Annual Return had been brought forward and that the RFO had been unable to balance the Accounts before her annual leave. The Internal Auditor had not been critical of this but it had been noted. Members were concerned that deadlines should be met in the future.
- 282.2 To agree amounts to be carried forward as outstanding projects or to be transferred into designated reserves. A paper from the RFO had been circulated with the Agenda. When the Council finalised the budget for 2009/10 it had been agreed that Outstanding Projects would total £3,750.00 and it was estimated that the amount available for the General and Designated Reserves would total in the region of £66,053.39, including a General Reserve of £27,500. Subsequent changes had meant that Outstanding Projects now totalled £22,441.10 and Designated Reserves £51,232.30 leaving only £3837.27 available for the General Reserve. The paper showed the situation at 1 April 2009 before the receipt of the first half of the precept and before expenditure which had occurred during the current financial year. As at 30 June 2009, the amount in hand was £108,544.67. At the F&GP meeting on 24 September 2008, members had considered

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a paper which reminded them that "To comply with official guidance, according to the latest edition of 'Governance and Accountability for Local Councils', the RFO recommended a review of the Council's reserves and outstanding projects and suggested that it would be advisable for the Council to agree that the general reserve should not be less than 25% of gross expenditure - £27,500.00 for 2008/09". The RFO therefore had asked Members to consider whether they wished to increase the General Reserve to nearer £27,500.00, possibly by reducing the amount of some of the Designated Reserves.

Members were satisfied that, with the second half of the precept due for payment in October, the Council would have sufficient funds to cover expenditure to the end of the financial year. During discussion it was noted that certain items earmarked as Designated Reserves would not come to fruition during the current financial year and that the low figure for the General Reserve did not in fact indicate that funds would not be available if unplanned expenditure became necessary. It was therefore AGREED to recommend to Full Council that there should be no reallocation of funds held as Designated Reserves at this stage and that this would be given further consideration after the half year point.

- 282.3 To review payments made to date in 2009/10. NOTED: the budget progress for 2009/10 showed that as at 30 June, from the F&GP budget of £99,900.00, a total of £19,549.56 had been spent. From the overall budget of £154,300.00, a total of £26,141.36 had been spent. From the Administration Budget of £77,650.00, the amount spent at the end of June was £15,514.08. The Receipts and Payments Summary and the Bank Reconciliation were tabled and noted.

Councillor Blunden stated that at the recent training day for Power of Wellbeing, Councillors had been informed of the importance of involving the public when setting the budget. All Committees needed to start thinking about their budgets well in advance and an article would be put in the next newsletter.

283. CONTRACTS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 01.04.09 TO 31.03.10

- 283.1 A paper had been circulated with the agenda showing the contracts and maintenance agreements currently in place and the contract in process of being set up with Premier Hygienic Ltd for the ongoing maintenance of the Denmans Lane toilets installation. This list was NOTED.

284. DIRECT DEBITS AND STANDING ORDERS IN FORCE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 01.04.09 TO 31.03.10

- 284.1 NOTED: the list of regular payments which were now being made by Direct Debit, all of which had been set up with two signatures to comply with the regulations.

285. REPORT FROM INTERNAL AUDITOR, FOLLOWING AUDIT VISIT ON 18 MAY 2009

- 285.1 Members considered that the Internal Auditor's report was very satisfactory. The points raised in the Report were NOTED:

- Long term debtors/creditors – VAT. The Auditor had suggested that VAT be reclaimed more frequently - quarterly. It had previously been agreed by F&GP that VAT should be reclaimed twice a year. The Chairman would discuss this with the RFO, although it was recognised that the Council could accept the comments of the Internal Auditor but state that it preferred not to follow the advice.
- Books not balanced at time of visit. The RFO had been on leave at the time of the Auditor's visit. Although the year end accounts had been virtually finalised, there had been a small discrepancy which had not been identified at the time of the visit. The sum of £9.20 had later been presumed to be an error in a VAT return and this had been reported to Council on 25 June. The Internal Auditor had reviewed the finalised accounts and had completed her section of the Annual Return.

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- Audit trails. The Auditor had recommended that minute numbers be written on vouchers for payment to show when expenditure was agreed.
 - Bookkeeping. The Internal Auditor had been aware of the small discrepancy and had pointed out that this did not need to be included on the Balance Sheet, which balanced correctly when the £9.20 was omitted. A revised Balance Sheet had been prepared to replace the one circulated with the original set of accounts which had been agreed by Full Council on 25 June 2009. It was AGREED to RECOMMEND to Full Council that the amended Balance Sheet should be signed.
- 285.2 Re-appointment of Mrs. G. Pritchitt as Internal Auditor for 2009/10 AGREED to RECOMMEND to Full Council that Mrs. G. Pritchitt should be re-appointed as the Parish Council's Internal Auditor for 2009/10 at an annual fee of £475.00 to include 2 inspections with mileage costs at 40p a mile.
286. TO CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING AND CONFERENCE EVENTS.
- 286.1 NOTED:
- 11 June – Cllrs. Gomme and Allen had attended a training and briefing session by SALC organised by Cuckfield Parish Council
 - 16 July – Cllrs Davies, Blunden and Gomme had attended the Power of Wellbeing training for Councillors for which a certificate was to be issued. Other training events for this would be taking place and 80% of the membership were required to have attended, to comply with the criteria for eligibility to make use of the Power of Wellbeing.
 - 4 – 5 September – the NALC Annual Conference was taking place at the Royal College of Physicians in London.
- 286.2 AGREED:
- 11 / 12 September - SALC Training weekend
 - New Clerks Briefing (one day – 12th) – Deputy Clerk - £75
 - Councillors Update and Briefing – Cllr. Davies attending 11th and 12th on a non residential basis - £135 .
 - Chairmanship Training (One day – 12th) – Cllr Gomme - £75
 - CiLCA fast track session 11th. It was AGREED that the Clerk should attend this session provided she had been able to complete a substantial amount of the portfolio beforehand. - £75
 - 28 September - Clerks' Networking Day – Clerk and Deputy Clerk
287. REFURBISHMENT OF THE DENMANS LANE PUBLIC TOILETS: TO AGREE FINAL PAYMENT OF SUM RETAINED FOR 3 MONTH MAINTENANCE PERIOD, DUE FOR PAYMENT 12 AUGUST.
- 287.1 The payment of the 2.5% retention was due to be paid on 12 August. Premier had been called out the previous week to attend to some relatively minor remedial work. The Environment and Amenities Committee had agreed to take out a contract with Premier for service and maintenance of the installation to cover future problems. It was AGREED to confirm the satisfactory completion of the installation and to pay the remaining sum of £1,448.95 plus VAT.
- 287.2 "Sleep Walk" on behalf of St. Peter and St. James Hospice. Cllr. Blunden reported that, by arrangement, the public toilets had been made available to those taking part in the recent "Sleep Walk. The organisers had expressed their gratitude as this had saved them over £300 for the hire of portable facilities.
288. ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATION AT DENMANS COURT.
- 288.1 An issue which had been holding up the finalisation of the lease had recently been resolved. A copy of the working draft (not amended to include this item) had been received from the Parish Council's Solicitor. It was AGREED to authorise Members of the Administration Sub Committee to go through the draft lease and

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arrange a meeting of the Sub Committee to confirm agreement of the final lease within the following two weeks, provided there were no further points to refer back to the Solicitor. 1 September was agreed as the target date for commencement.

289. TO AGREE THE REMITS OF THE INSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT SUB COMMITTEE AND THE ADMINISTRATION SUB COMMITTEE

289.1 The tabled draft Terms of Reference were read out and AGREED:

289.2 Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee

1. The Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee shall report to the Finance and General Purposes Committee which shall approve and amend, as appropriate, the terms of reference.
2. Membership, which may be amended by the Finance and General Purposes Committee, shall be: The Chairman, Vice Chairman and two other members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee
3. Chairman to be elected at the first meeting of the Sub Committee after the first meeting of the F&GP Committee of the new Council year.
4. Meetings normally to be held in public, except when exempt business is to be discussed.
5. Minutes to be received by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
6. The Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee shall have the power to act within its remit. Any recommendations on matters outside the remit of the Sub Committee, which arise from its deliberations, shall be referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Remit:

7. In consultation with the Clerk and RFO, to review the insurance policies of the Council, on an annual basis prior to the policy renewal date and at other times should the need arise.
8. To agree minor amendments to the policy incurring an increase in premiums of no more than £100, above which a recommendation should be made to the Finance and General Purposes Committee
9. Any recommendations to change the Council's Insurers should be referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee
10. To oversee the Council's risk management procedures and to ensure that the requirements are met

289.3 Administration Sub Committee

1. The Administration Sub Committee shall report to the Finance and General Purposes Committee which shall approve and amend, as appropriate, the terms of reference.
2. Membership, which may be amended by the Finance and General Purposes Committee, shall be: The Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council and The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

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3. Chairman to be elected at the first meeting of the Sub Committee after the first meeting of the F&GP Committee of the new Council year.
4. Meetings normally to be held in public, except when exempt business is to be discussed.
5. Minutes to be received by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
6. The Administration Sub Committee shall have the power to act within its remit. Any recommendations on matters outside the remit of the Sub Committee, which arise from its deliberations, shall be referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Remit:

7. To oversee the provision of equipment etc and the running and maintenance of the Parish Office premises, within the agreed Administration Budget and in consultation with the Parish Clerk
 8. In consultation with the Clerk, to do all other things necessary to maintain the efficient operation of the Parish Office.
 9. In consultation with the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee, to take responsibility for arranging periodic routine checks on the Parish Office premises and monitoring working practices to comply with Health and Safety and Risk Management requirements
 10. To oversee employment matters, including staff appointments, staff appraisals, written statements of particulars of employment and grievance and discipline procedures and to report to Full Council through the F&GP Committee on pay reviews and staffing levels.
290. RISK MANAGEMENT: TO NOTE PROGRESS.
- 290.1 The Clerk had been entered details on to the new software but there was still a considerable amount of work to be done.
291. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.
- 291.1 No other items of business were raised.

This part of the meeting concluded at 8.53 p.m.

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

Reserves. Mr. Kerslake commented that auditors would not take issue unless the General Reserve was greater than the annual precept. The Council's General Reserve had become low because the Council had previously kept the precept low and used the General Reserve to fund the overspend in the budget. Designated Reserves related to specific items and should not be used to supplement the General Reserve.

Sub Committee Terms of Reference. Mr. Kerslake stated that the Terms of Reference should have stated that they would be reviewed after six or nine months to determine whether they were adequate.

Additional Accommodation at Denmans Court. Mr. Kerslake expressed disappointment with the way this item was being handled and stated that when the lease became a public document he would ask to see it.

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292. CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

- 292.1 It was considered and agreed that it was appropriate for the following items to be discussed in confidential session. The Chairman therefore moved a resolution under Standing Order 35(A): " that in view of the special nature of the business about to be transacted it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw. This was AGREED.
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The Confidential part of the meeting commenced at 9.00 p.m.

293. STAFFING ISSUES:

- 293.1 Written Statement of Particulars of Employment for the Deputy Parish Clerk. Two minor amendments were noted and the Statement as amended was AGREED.
- 293.2 Local Government Pension Scheme. Scheme. It was AGREED to RECOMMEND to Full Council that a statutory resolution should be passed in respect of admission of a new member to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

294. ALTERNATIVE/ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATION.

- 294.1 The potential availability of premises which might be suitable as alternative accommodation was NOTED.

The meeting concluded at 9.15 p.m.