

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on Thursday 28 May 2009 at the King Edward Hall, Lindfield.

Present: Mr. S. Willcox (Vice Chairman) – Chairman for the meeting
Mr. M. Allen
Mr. W. Blunden
Mr. A. Gomme
Mrs. V. Upton

Also present: 2 members of the public

In attendance: Mrs. C. Irwin

The meeting commenced at 8.00 p.m.

244. WELCOME AND EMERGENCY ANNOUNCEMENTS.

244.1 The Chairman of Council opened the meeting, welcomed those present and announced the emergency procedure for the King Edward Hall..

245. TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN FOR THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

245.1 This being the first meeting of the Committee for the new Council year, Councillor Blunden, as Chairman of Council called for nominations for the office of Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for the Council year 2009/10. Councillor Michael Davies was PROPOSED and SECONDED. It was understood that Cllr. Davies was willing to serve as Chairman and, there being no further nominations Cllr. Davies was duly ELECTED.

246. TO ELECT A VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

246.1 As Councillor Davies was not present, the Chairman called for nominations for the office of Vice Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. Cllr. Steve Willcox was PROPOSED and SECONDED. There being no further nominations, Cllr. Willcox was duly ELECTED and, in the absence of the Chairman of the Committee, took the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

247. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

247.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Davies and Nicolle and the reasons accepted.

248. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

248.1 Cllr. Allen declared a prejudicial interest in item 29 as he was a friend of the residents of 21 Denmans Lane.

249. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

249.1 There were no questions or comments from members of the public.

250. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 MARCH 2009

250.1 The Chairman called for approval of the Minutes and Confidential Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 19 March 2009. These were AGREED and the Chairman SIGNED the Minutes and Confidential Minutes as a true record of that meeting.

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251. COMPOSITION OF SUB COMMITTEES OR WORKING GROUPS OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE:

251.1 On the recommendation of the Clerk, Members considered the status of the various groups reporting to F&GP. The Local Government Act 1972 section 101 provided for a Council to arrange for the discharge of any of its functions by a Committee, Sub Committee or Officer of the Council (or by another local authority). Less formal groups, such as the working groups, had no power to make decisions or take action, whereas a sub committee would have power to act within its given remit. According to the Council's Standing Orders, meetings of Council, Committees and Sub Committees must be held in public but, although the Working Groups had been open to the public in the past, this was not a requirement and could be counter productive, given the more practical nature of the work undertaken by Working Groups. Advantages of Sub Committees were that they could be convened as required when decisions needed to be made quickly; meetings could take place during the day at the Parish Office; the agenda would be focused on the particular issues and detailed discussion at the main committee meetings may be lessened.

251.2 Insurance And Risk Management Sub Committee. This group had been set up to review Insurance and had since evolved into the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee, but apparently without a formal decision on record to establish it as a sub committee. AGREED that the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee should be formally established as a sub committee, reporting to the Finance and General Purposes Committee and with membership comprising Cllrs. Gomme, Davies and Allen, plus Cllr. Willcox, as recommended by the Sub Committee at its last meeting.

251.3 Office Workload Working Group. This group had been set up in 2006 with the remit to

- Undertake a fundamental review of the work of the Parish Office and the demands made on the staff
- Formulate a system of regular appraisals for the staff
- Submit reports and recommendations to the F&GP Committee.

It was recognised that the group had not achieved as much as had been hoped and that it could be a more useful tool if its remit was wider and it had the status of Sub Committee, particularly when it came to setting up the new office accommodation at Denmans Court. It was AGREED to replace the Office Workload Working Group by an Administration Sub Committee with a remit to make decisions within defined limits and to include Staffing and Parish Office issues.

AGREED that the membership should comprise Cllrs. Blunden, Davies, Nicolle and Willcox.

251.4 Public Toilets Working Group. AGREED that this Working Group should be wound up as the refurbishment of the Public Toilets was complete and the ongoing maintenance was the responsibility of the Environment and Amenities Committee.

251.5 Directory Editorial Group. There were currently two groups involved with the production of the Directory: the Editorial Group (set up to review and oversee the content) and an additional group of Members who had offered to give practical help as required. AGREED to combine the two groups and that there was no need for this to be a sub committee as the next edition of the Directory was always planned ahead of time with a report to F&GP early in the year and the major issues, such as whether to increase prices of adverts were decided then. It was the Committee's custom each year to confirm that the Clerk (or Deputy) should have the authority to make the detailed decisions on the layout and content - in consultation (where appropriate) with the group of Councillors responsible. The Directory Working Group would comprise Cllrs. Allen, Willcox, Davies, Gomme and Upton.

251.6 Terms of Reference. It was AGREED that the individual Sub Committees should draft their terms of reference for approval by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

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252. ACTION LIST / PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT

252.1 The list was noted without comment.

253. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.

253.1 The Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee had forwarded any items to report.

254. GRANTS AND DONATIONS:

Councillor reported on the following requests for funding:

254.1 Open Spaces Society. This organisation campaigned to create and conserve common land, village greens, open spaces and rights of public access in town and country. They had requested funding because their income had diminished due to the general economic situation. The Parish Council already paid an annual subscription for membership of the Open Spaces Society. It was AGREED not to support this request.

254.2 Streetmate. Streetmate was a charitable initiative founded eight years previously by Churches Together in Haywards Heath and District and the National Children's Society, NCH, (now Action for Children). Streetmate 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. The Parish Council had previously made grants to Streetmate, which was considered to be of benefit to the Village, and it was AGREED to support this request.

RESOLVED that the Council, in accordance with its powers under sections 137 and 139 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 £300 towards the work of Streetmate.

254.3 Tiger Cubs Pre-School. Tiger Cubs Pre-School had requested funding towards the costs of a fundraising event to raise money to purchase equipment and materials etc for the Pre School. AGREED not to support this request.

254.4 Letters of appreciation for grants made. NOTED: a letter received from 4Sight, thanking the Council for a donation of £100.

255. FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE BUDGET 2008/09:

255.1 To review payments made in 2008/09. NOTED that the Responsible Financial Officer had not yet completed the year end accounts. The budget progress to 31 March which was circulated in time for the last Full Council meeting showed that the F&GP budget for 2008/09 was overspent by £7728.45. As previously noted, the largest overspent item was staff salaries due to staff changes that had not been anticipated when the budget was set.

255.2 Analysis of administration budget 2008/09 to agree amounts to be carried forward as outstanding projects or to be transferred into designated reserves to review the budget for 2009-10 and agree a plan of action

The RFO would be completing her work on the year end accounts on her return from holiday. It was therefore AGREED that these three items should be deferred for consideration at the meeting to be held on 23 July when the figures would be available.

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256. TO NOTE CONTRACTS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 01.04.09 TO 31.03.10
- 256.1 AGREED to defer this item for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee on 23 July, by which time the Clerk should have had the opportunity to consult the RFO.
257. TO CONSIDER REPORT FROM INTERNAL AUDITOR, IF AVAILABLE, FOLLOWING AUDIT VISIT ON 18 MAY 2009
- 257.1 The report had not yet been received. NOTED that, as the RFO had not finished balancing the accounts when the Internal Auditors paid their visit on 18 May, she would be making arrangements with them regarding completion of the Annual Return in due course.
258. INSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT SUB COMMITTEE
- 258.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee held on 21 May 2009. Cllr. Gomme reported that Members had discussed the renewal of the Insurance Policy and the new Risk Management software. At the previous meeting, it had been considered that certain items were under insured and the Clerk had followed this up by making enquiries of other Parish Councils and the responses from other Clerks had confirmed that the level of cover needed increasing. A letter had then been sent to Zurich requesting a quotation to increase the cover for material damage, business interruption and personal accident. Zurich had subsequently advised that the original premium should be paid and they would send a supplementary invoice for consideration. It had also been agreed that, in advance of the renewal date in 2010, quotations should be obtained from other insurers who were willing to write this kind of business. The new Risk Management software had been installed and lists were being produced for Committees for their particular functions. More work was needed to set up and maintain the system. The F&GP lists would be presented to the next meeting of F&GP after consultation with the RFO regarding the financial risk sections. Cllr. Gomme had offered to go through the Insurance Holding Checklist printout against the Insurance Policy and report back to the next meeting of the Sub Committee. It had been suggested that Cllr. Willcox, as Vice Chairman of F&GP, should be invited to join the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee.
- AGREED to receive the minutes of the meeting of the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee held on 21 May 2009.
259. BACK-UP FOR THE PARISH OFFICE COMPUTERS.
- 259.1 It was acknowledged that a means of backing up the Parish Office computers without generating a lot more work needed to be found: the Internal Auditors regularly enquired about back up. One possible solution was an external hard drive (available for under £100) but other solutions were available, for example a remote service through the broadband or anti virus software provider and these would be investigated. AGREED that the Clerk should be authorised to make the necessary arrangements.
260. LIAISON WITH LINDFIELD RURAL PARISH COUNCIL
- 260.1 Cllr. Blunden reported that there had been no formal response from Lindfield Rural Parish Council, although it was understood that there had been no support for the idea of a merger when it was raised at their Parish Meeting. AGREED that the Clerk should remind the Clerk to Lindfield Rural Parish Council that a response was still awaited.
261. COMMUNICATIONS FORUM
- 261.1 Meeting of the Communications Forum held on 28 April 2009. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 April had been circulated prior to this meeting. Cllr. Gomme reported that continued support for Lindfield Life was

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important as the publication was only as good as the material supplied to it. The magazine was reported to be breaking even financially. There had been some initial problems with delivery, particularly in the rural areas, as no distributors would send children to such areas. The Village Map was raised at every meeting and it was noted that the Parish Council would endeavour to move an alternative proposal forward. AGREED to receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Forum held on 28 April 2009.

262. PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

262.1 The next newsletter had to be put together by the end of the following week. Cllr. Gomme had written a few short articles to include and others would be added. Cllrs. Gomme and Davies would not be available to oversee this and Cllr. Willcox offered to assist the Clerk in getting the newsletter ready and checking the content.

263. TO CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING AND CONFERENCE EVENTS.

263.1 AGREED:

- § 10 June LCAS Seminar- 1 free place and £30 each for additional delegates – Clerk unless a Member came forward
- § 11-12 September - Councillors' update (SALC) – (£155.25 non residential, £210.25 residential, including VAT) - Cllr. Davies
- § 12 September - Chairmanship Day - £86.25 – Cllr. Gomme
- § 12 September - New Clerks briefing - new Deputy Clerk to be encouraged to attend – (£75)
- § 28 September - Clerks' Networking Day - £51.75 including VAT. - Clerk

264. REFURBISHMENT OF THE DENMANS LANE PUBLIC TOILETS

264.1 NOTED that the refurbishment of the WCs was finished. The service area had been painted this week and was now presentable and fit for purpose. AGREED that the invoice for the extra work should be paid when received. 2.5% retention (£1448.95 plus VAT) was still being held for a 3 month maintenance period from completion of the work under the main contract (13 May). An Official Opening ceremony was to take place on 29 May at 3.30 p.m.

265. ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATION AT DENMANS COURT

265.1 Lease. The Parish Council's Solicitor was still in negotiation with the Landlord's Solicitors about the terms of the lease, but he was hopeful that this would soon be resolved and 1 July was suggested as the start date for the lease. The Clerk had talked to him today as there were still some outstanding issues.

265.2 Arrangements for furnishings and equipment. AGREED that the newly formed Administration Sub Committee should oversee the fitting out of the new premises.

266. DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE

266.1 Due to competing priorities the Clerk had been unable to produce a draft for this meeting. AGREED to defer this item for consideration at the next meeting of the F&GP Committee on 23 July.

267. STAFFING ISSUES

267.1 To note and agree the rates notified by NJC for travelling and subsistence applicable from 1 April 2009. The new rates, which had been circulated with the agenda, were NOTED.

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- 267.2 Arrangements for the appointment of a new Deputy Parish Clerk. NOTED that twelve applications had been received and the closing date was 29 May. The shortlisted Applicants would be interviewed on 15 June.
- 267.3 Local Government Pension Scheme: review Contribution Bandings. The contribution rates paid by employees to the Local Government Pension Scheme depended on which band the employee came into according to the full time equivalent rate of pensionable pay. Part time employees only paid contributions on what they actually earned but at the rate applicable for the pay band they would be in if full time. The salary range for each band was revised annually and notification had been received of the uplift taking effect from 1 April 2009. The Parish Council had to inform the Scheme Administrator if any employee's salary had now gone over into the next band. The Clerk and the Deputy Clerk, if he/she joined the scheme, both came into band 4 - £18,901 to £31,500 for which the contribution rate was 6.5%. There was therefore no change to the band applicable to the Parish Council staff. It had been agreed last year to review the bandings once a year at the nearest F&GP meeting to 1 April, in line with WSCC's review. AGREED to record that the Contribution Bandings had been reviewed and there was no change. This would be reviewed again in April 2010.
268. EMERGENCY PLAN
- 268.1 Cllrs. Allen and Willcox reported that there was now a draft available for discussion. It was AGREED that this should be an agenda item for the next meeting of the Insurance and Risk Management Sub Committee.
269. ANY OTHER BUSINESS
- 269.1 No items of other business were raised.
270. ITEMS LISTED IN THE CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS PART OF THE AGENDA
- 270.1 The Chairman asked Members to consider whether the items 28 and 29 needed to be considered in confidential session according to the Agenda, or whether they could be brought forward to the open part of the meeting. AGREED that the staffing issues should be held in closed session but that there was no real need for agreement of the Licence fee for land to the south of 21 Denmans Lane to be a confidential item as the facts could easily be ascertained from the Council's publicly available accounts and other records.
271. LAND TO THE SOUTH OF 21 DENMANS LANE: TO AGREE LICENCE FEE FOR THE PERIOD 01.04.09 TO 31.03.10.
- 271.1 The residents of 21 Denmans Lane used a portion of allotment land as part of their garden by formal agreement. It was agreed in 2008 that the licence fee for 2009/10 should be increased from £64.50 to £70, in line with the Allotment rent increases which went up by approximately 10% for 2009/10.
- 271.2 Councillor Allen, having declared a prejudicial interest in this item, left the room.
- 271.3 RESOLVED: that the Licence for use of the land to the south of 21 Denmans Lane should be renewed for a further year, from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 and that the licence fee for 2009/10 should be £70 as agreed by Full council on 26 March 2008 .

Councillor Allen rejoined the meeting.

This part of the meeting ended at 8.58 p.m.

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

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Licence for land to south of 21 Denmans Lane.

Councillor Allen withdrew from the meeting for the duration of this item.

Mr. N. Kerslake offered the opinion that as this land should not be treated in the same way as allotment land as it was an asset for the residents of 21 Denmans Lane. The Council should therefore ensure that it was getting a fair price. Mr. Kerslake added that it was very much in the public interest to know how the licence fee was set.

Councillor Allen rejoined the meeting.

272. The Chairman moved 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 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 9.05 p.m.

273. STAFFING ISSUES

- 273.1 Report on the Chairman's Exit Interview with the former Deputy Clerk. The Chairman reported on the exit interview and a number of points were noted for further consideration.

The meeting ended at 9.30 p.m.