

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY 07 NOVEMBER 2019** at the King Edward Hall, Lindfield.

The meeting began at 20.00 hours.

Parish Councillors:	Mr. S. Henton (Chairman)	Mr. M. Leach (*)
	Mr. W. Blunden	Mr. R. Pickett (*)
	Mrs. L. Grace	Mrs. V. Upton (*)
	Mrs. M. Hearsey (*)	

(*) Denotes absence

Also present: Councillor R. Plass

In attendance: Mr. A. Funnell (Parish Clerk)
Mrs T. Ely (RFO)

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

64. TO RECEIVE AND ACCEPT APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE.

64.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. M. Hearsey, Mr. M. Leach, Mr. R. Pickett and Mrs. V. Upton and their reasons were accepted.

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

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

66. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

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

67. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 5 SEPTEMBER 2019.

67.1 The Chairman called for approval of the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Thursday 5 September 2019. These were **AGREED** and the Chairman **SIGNED** the Minutes as being a true record of that meeting.

67. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

67.1 The Chairman made no announcements.

68. ACTION LIST.

68.1 The Chairman referred to the Action List which had been circulated with the Agenda and this was **NOTED**.

69. GRANTS AND DONATIONS.

69.1 i) Grants budget. It was **NOTED** that £1,800 had been spent from a budget of £2,800.

ii) To consider Grant requests.

Councillor Blunden reported on behalf of the Grants Panel and consideration had been given towards the following grant request:

a. Mid Sussex Older People's Council (MSOPC).

MSOPC were a registered charity and had submitted an application for a grant of £250 dated 12 October 2019.

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A Christmas Tea and entertainment for elderly residents had been organised to take place in King Edward Hall, Lindfield on 7 December 2019. This event provided important social interaction within the community especially at Christmas time and would be offered free of charge. A minibus service would provide transport to residents living in rural areas of Mid Sussex who were experiencing difficulty with travel arrangements. A grant would contribute towards the cost of providing the venue, catering and entertainment as well as fuel for the minibus.

RESOLVED: that in accordance with the recommendation of the Grants Panel and the Council's powers under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, the following expenditure should be incurred 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 £250 be made towards the work of Mid Sussex Older People's Council.

iii) Letters of Thanks Received. It was **NOTED** that a letter of thanks had been received from Victim Support.

70. BUDGET 2019/20.

70.1 The budget progress reports to 30 September 2019 were **NOTED**:

i) Finance and General Purposes Committee: a total of £80,679.88 had been spent from the budget of £158,400.

ii) Analysis of Administration Budget: a total of £74,271.49 had been spent from the budget of £140,500.

iii) Overall Council Budget 2019/20: a total of £99,561.37 had been spent from the budget of £238,000 of which £18,881.49 had been spent from the Environment and Amenities Committee's budget of £79,400. There had been no expenditure from the Planning & Traffic Committee budget of £200. A total of £2,263.94 had been spent from Designated Reserves.

iv) General Reserve Expenditure: a total of £4,002.00 had been spent from General Reserve

v) To authorise use of the Debit Card for Expenditure: there were no items of expenditure requiring use of a debit card.

71. BUDGET 2020/2021.

71.1 The Chairman referred to the Budget Report that had been prepared by the Clerk and circulated with the Agenda. Contents included the following:

- Summary Report – with included recommendation and budget setting Schedule
- Finance & General Purposes Committee Proposed Administration Budget
- Finance & General Purposes Committee Proposed Budget
- Comparison between Proposed Budgets 1 and 2
- Precept Calculation

Committee Budgets had been considered and proposed, which had provided the opportunity to examine the proposed overall Budget for 2020/2021 and precept calculation.

It was reported that the three committees had considered their respective budgets which on aggregation had resulted in a proposal for an unacceptable level of increase in the precept. Subsequently the Chairmen of the committees had met with the Clerk and made a number adjustments to each of the budgets so as to bring the precept requirement down to an acceptable level. The revised budgets would then need the respective committees' further approval. These adjustments meant that several worthwhile projects would have to be taken out for 2020/2021. However, they would not be forgotten and might well form part of the business plan for forthcoming years. Papers detailing the original and revised budgets had been circulated to members of F&GP. The following totals were considered and approved for reference back to the respective committees for their further consideration:

Finance & General Purposes Committee	£ 161,500
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Environment & Amenities Committee	52,350
Planning & Traffic Committee	<u>4,500</u>
Total Proposed Budget	218,350

After taking account of Anticipated Funds in Hand at year end, and the need for funds to support the reserves (£138,170.00), the revised budget gave rise to a precept requirement of £173,526. Compared with the current years' precept of £156,000 this increase was considered to be acceptable. It was noted that the figures could be subject to some changes as the year end became closer, which would enable a more accurate estimate of 'funds at year end' to be made.

Accordingly, it was **AGREED** to recommend to Full Council a budget of £218,350 (subject to minor amendment) and a proposed precept of £173,526 rounded down. It was noted that a final review of the budget and precept by the Finance & General Purposes committee would take place at their next meeting due to be held on 12 December 2019, to be followed by Full Council's approval in January 2020.

72. BARCLAYS BANK UPDATE ON INTERNET BANKING.

72.1 The Chairman reported that he had successfully obtained access to online banking.

73. INTERNAL AUDITOR: TO NOTE APPOINTMENT, INTERIM AUDIT AND FEES FOR 2019/2020.

73.1 It was **NOTED** that Mr. Peter Frost had been re-appointed as the Council's Internal Auditor for the 2019/2020 audit period. Fees remained unchanged at £65.00 per hour. An interim audit had been arranged to be carried out on 27 November 2019.

74. STANDING ORDERS AND REGULATIONS: A) PROPOSED AMENDMENT AND B) REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS.

74.1 The Chairman referred to the report on Standing Orders and Regulations that been prepared by the Clerk and circulated with the Agenda. In order to prevent disruption to existing council services it had been proposed that new policy wording for Standing Orders 7.c and Financial Regulations 4.6 be incorporated into the Council's standing orders and financial regulations.

It was **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that the new policy wording for Standing Orders 7.c and Financial Regulations 4.6 be incorporated into the Council's standing orders and financial regulations.

75. PROPOSED PUBLIC TOILETS ON THE COMMON: UPDATE.

75.1 The Chairman referred to a report that been prepared by the Clerk and circulated with the Agenda.

It was **NOTED** that the Council had instructed a solicitor to assist with the Section 38 Commons Act 2006 application. The quotation was able to be considered under the existing agreed limit of expenditure whereby payment could be authorised by the Clerk and in conjunction with the Chairman. Concern had been raised regarding additional work that may be required in support of the application, which would incur increased expenditure. The hourly cost for a solicitor was £250. Members had been asked to confirm their consent for additional expenditure to be incurred.

It was **AGREED** that the Clerk, in consultation with the Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman, can if necessary, authorise additional expenditure in support of the Section 38 Act 2006 application. This would be subject to a maximum limit of £2,000 net of VAT.

76. VILLAGE DIRECTORY AND YEAR BOOK 2020: TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS RELATING TO THE PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION.

76.1 The Chairman reported that it was anticipated that copies of the Village Directory and Year Book 2020 would be delivered in the next week or so. These were being distributed to members of the public via a professional company as previously agreed.

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The above was **NOTED**.

77. BUSINESS PLAN: TO NOTE COUNCILLOR AND STAFF RESPONSES HAVE BEEN RECEIVED. TO CONSIDER NEXT STAGES.

- 77.1 The Chairman referred to the report that had been prepared by the Clerk and circulated with the Agenda. Members and staff of the Council had completed a feedback form in support of the proposed business plan. Replies had been consolidated into a report which had not yet been distributed. In order to progress this matter further, a proposal had been outlined to recommend that a working group be appointed with terms of reference as stated. It was proposed that the working group would seek expert advice from third parties, such as SSALC or a large tier authority.

It was **AGREED** to appoint a Business Plan working group of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and their membership and terms of reference would be as follows:

Membership – 6 Members.

Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Councillors Mr. S.Henton, Mr. W. Blunden, Mr. R. Plass and Mrs. L. Grace.

Terms of Reference.

1. Consider internal feedback form responses;
2. Identify proposed methodology the council will use to formulate its business plan;
3. Seek input from third parties;
4. Produce a report for Full Council.

78. SOCIAL MEDIA: UPDATE.

- 78.1 The Clerk reported that both the Clerk and Deputy Clerk had visited a neighbouring Local Authority to receive advice on how they managed their social media account. Facebook provided a greater number of controls compared to Twitter. A full written report would follow as soon as possible.

The above was **NOTED**.

79. CLERK'S REPORT.

- 79.1 The Clerk reported on the following items:

PAT Testing.

Portable Appliance Testing had been carried out on 29 October 2019.

VAT Reclaim.

A claim for VAT refund totalling £6,244.78 had been submitted on 4 November 2019.

The RFO reported on the following:

Castle Water: Denmans Lane Public Toilets.

Notification of a change of Direct Debit payment had been received increasing the monthly payment from £6.92 to £345.39. On further investigation it was confirmed that due to a clerical error when administration of the account was transferred from South East Water to Castle Water in 2018 an incorrect meter reading had been provided. A total charge of £1,381.54 was now owing after the Council had submitted a current meter read.

It was **AGREED** that Caste Water would be approached with a view to making a one off payment to settle the outstanding balance. This would help to maintain a more realistic regular monthly payment reflecting current usage to assist with budgeting.

80. TO CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING AND CONFERENCE EVENTS.

- 80.1 The Clerk confirmed attendance of staff at the following training and conference events:

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SSALC Clerks Technical Networking Day 7 November 2019	Clerk & Deputy Clerk
SSALC Finance & Budget Training 13 November 2019	Cllr Grace

The above was **NOTED**.

81. MATTERS 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.

81.1 There were no matters arising.

The public part of the meeting ended at 20.51 hours.

82. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC [AND PRESS].

82.1 It was **RESOLVED** in accordance with the Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960 Section 1(2) and the Parish Council's Standing Order 3 (d) that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted it as desirable in the public interest that the public [and press] be excluded.

83. CLOCK TOWER HOUSE LEASE.

83.1 It was **NOTED** that a response was still awaited.

The meeting concluded at 20.52 hours.