

HERSTMONCEUX PARISH COUNCIL

Agenda Item: Committee Reports – F&GP

Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on **Tuesday 10 November 2015** at Herstmonceux Village Hall, Hailsham Road, Herstmonceux.

Present: Councillors: Mrs J. Angear (Chairman), M. Bradshaw, M. Goodsell, Mrs H. Kenward, S. Nash, I. Stewart.

S. Goacher, RFO, attended and took the Minutes.

Members of the Public: None.

FGP.1.11.15 Apologies Received: None.

FGP.2.11.15 Declaration of Interests: Councillor M. Goodsell; small village contracts, Councillors Mrs J. Angear and I. Stewart: Herstmonceux Village Hall.

FGP.3.11.15 Dispensation Requests: None

FGP.4.11.15 Current Year Expenditure:

Fingerpost Junction of Church Road / Lower Road: Councillor Mrs Kenward brought to the attention of the meeting that the fingerpost at the junction of Church Road/Lower Road had been badly damaged and was in need of repair. The Highways Committee had obtained an estimate, incorporating an Ash main post, in the sum of £1040.40 from Jakk 'Country' Furniture Designs. Councillor Goodsell informed the meeting that an Ash main post would only last for approx. 5 years, and he recommended a main post in Oak or Sweet Chestnut. Councillor Kenward was asked to obtain a revised estimate to include a main post made from either Oak or Sweet Chestnut, before any decision was made by Full Council

Seat adjacent to Stunts Green Farm: The seat, that had been covered with vegetation, and discovered adjacent to Stunts Green Farm has been inspected by Councillor Mrs Kenward, and is constructed of concrete with wooden slats. All the wooden slats require replacement. Councillor Goodsell had provided an estimate of £110.00 to undertake this. The Finance Officer was asked what a new seat would cost, and quoting a recent purchase of a Phoenix seat the cost inclusive of VAT would be £472. The meeting **RECOMMENDS** that the slats on the existing concrete seat are replaced at an estimated cost of £110.00. The RFO noted that this seat would be added to the Assets Register at a nominal value of £250.

FGP.5.11.15 Annual Estimates (Version 2): The Finance Officer circulated to all Members attending the meeting copies of the 'Estimate Template' forms and Forms 'B' received from Committees & Councillors which had been included in the Annual Estimates (v2). The meeting went through each form and agreed that the following provisions should be included in the Estimates:

Finance & General Purposes Committee:

Subscriptions: SALC had notified the Parish Council by e-mail that the NALC/SALC subscriptions for 2016-17 were to be levied as SALC £607.17 & NALC £138.20. Provision had therefore been increased to £610 and £140 respectively. The meeting **RECOMMENDS** acceptance of this provision.

Special Projects – Website update: Following the agreement at the October Full Council a provision of £1500 had been made in the current year for the update of new templates for the website.

Herstmonceux Village Hall: Councillor Bradshaw had requested that provision should be made within the estimates for 'Village Hall Support' and had submitted a completed Estimate form to provide for £1,700 in 2016-17, and 2017-18, and £1,500 in 2018-19. The Finance Officer enquired as to how these figures had been

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arrived at, and Councillor Bradshaw replied that he had looked at several websites of Town and Parish Councils and had averaged out the contributions that were being given to Village Halls by those local councils. The Finance Officer felt that the Parish Council should make decisions of such support based on sound need and estimated financial information, as the Parish Council were dealing with Council Tax Payers money. Councillor Nash felt that any financial support should be 'Project' based, not just a general contribution. The meeting discussed at length the ways of support either by provision within Reserves or by the Annual Grant procedure, or both. Councillor Stewart, having declared an interest, was permitted to give an idea of future maintenance, replacement, and/or upgrading of utility systems needed by the Village Hall Committee. Councillor Kenward pointed out that the Council's Grant procedure restricted any such support to being decided upon once a year, in the August cycle of meetings. The Finance Officer suggested that in order to provide for financial support the Village Hall Committee be asked to provide a copy of its 'Forward Maintenance Programme', with estimated costs, covering at least the future three years, so that the Parish Council can consider provision of reasonable financial support within its Annual Estimate process. The meeting **RECOMMENDS** the inclusion within the General Reserve Account provision of financial support of £1,700 in 2016/17 and 2017/18, and £1,500 in 2018/19, together with the increase of the overall Grant provision in 2016/17 of £2,000 to a total of £8,500. The Clerk to write formally to the Village Hall Committee stating that the Parish Council wish to make provision for reasonable financial support in respect of the Village Hall and that in addition to the requirement of submitting confirmation of the Insurance renewal, and a copy of the Annual Accounts each year, that its 'Forward Maintenance Programme', with costings, covering at least the future three years, be submitted to the Parish Council by 30th September in each year.

Office Equipment: The Clerk had reminded the Finance Officer that the current laptop, provided by the Parish Council, was in excess of five years old. The Finance Officer sought the permission of the Committee to include a provision to replace the existing laptop and any allied accessories. Councillor Bradshaw, on behalf of the Personnel Sub-Committee also requested of the Finance Officer to provide for the Clerk to have a mobile telephone, which should be used by Councillors and residents to contact the Clerk. This telephone can then be left behind on occasions of annual holidays, so that the Clerk is not officially contactable. The Meeting **RECOMMENDS** the provisions of £750 for a suitable laptop and a further £150 for a mobile telephone and costs.

Highways Committee:

Protection of Grass verges in Buckwell Rise & Queens Road: Application for relevant licences and installation of wooden posts to protect verges from parked vehicles. Provision £750 in 2016-17. The meeting **RECOMMENDS** acceptance of this provision.

Victoria Road Junction, Windmill Hill: Installation of double yellow lines to prevent the parking of vehicles on dangerous corner. The meeting rejected any provision for this as it was an East Sussex Highways responsibility. However, if the Parish Council wish to pursue this an appropriate letter to the East Sussex Highways Department, would be appropriate.

Communications: The recently constituted Communications Committee had submitted an Estimate Form for provision of the design of a new website, Annual Maintenance of a website, printing and design costs of a Herstmonceux Brochure, Corporate Stationery, Corporate Logo, advertising of Council Events, and Vitality Village. The Finance Officer showed the meeting that all these items had already been included in the Annual Estimates.

Access Road, Village Hall site: In anticipation of a forthcoming meeting with Dr

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Simmonds, regarding the access road to the Village Hall and New Surgery site, an estimate for the resurfacing and remarking of the yellow lines on the access road had been requested of Mr Southouse of Hailsham Roadway. The Finance Officer had, therefore, included provision as part of the General Reserve Account £7,500 for the resurfacing and a further £600 for the remarking of the yellow lines. The meeting **RECOMMENDS** acceptance of this provision.

FGP.6.11.15

Personnel Sub-Committee: The meeting received the following Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee. Councillor Bradshaw took the meeting through the document:

Present: Members of the Personnel Committee: Councillors M. Bradshaw, S. Nash and I Stewart, Mr S. Goacher, Finance Officer and Mrs J. McInnes, Parish Clerk.

1. **Apologies** and reasons for absence - none.
2. **Declaration of Interests** on the agenda items below -none.
3. **Dispensation Request** - none.
4. **Terms of Reference**
 - i. The Committee is a Sub-Committee of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and will report to that Committee.
 - ii. The Committee will comprise of three councillors who are elected at the Annual Meeting.
 - iii. The quorum is three councillors.
 - iv. The Committee will ensure that the Council takes responsibility for the well-being of its staff.
 - v. The Committee will ensure that the Council is complying with employment laws.
 - vi. All members must preserve confidentiality of discussions held at meetings.
 - vii. One meeting will be held once a year to review all staff contracts, job descriptions and HR policies. Otherwise meetings will be convened as and when necessary, e.g. to deal with grievance or disciplinary matters, in line with Council policy; to recruit staff; or deal with emerging personnel issues.
 - viii. The Committee will review annually, contracts of employment, job descriptions and person specification.
 - ix. The Committee will review staffing salaries and terms and conditions and make recommendations to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
 - x. The Committee will conduct annual staff appraisals and provide feedback to the Finance and General Purposes Committee on any issues that arise.

5. **Contracts and Job Descriptions, Pay Scales, Appraisals**

The Finance Officer supplied an Information Pack to the Committee containing the following:

- a. Finance Officer - Contract of Employment, Variance of Contract of Employment, Job Description, current salary details.
- b. Parish Clerk - Contract of Employment, Variation of Contract of Employment, Job Description, current salary details, Specimen Contract of Employment, Certificate in Local Council Administration.
- c. SLCC Contracts of Employment, Variation to contracts and specimen Job

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Descriptions.

- d. SLCC Appraisal Information.
- e. SLCC 2014 -2016 National Salary Awards.
- f. SLCC Discipline and Grievance procedure Models.
- g. Councillor Bradshaw circulated a list of items for consideration.
 - i. Contract of employment – needs to comply with Employment Acts and EU Directives
 - Hours of work
 - Place of work
 - Working Hours Directive
 - Grievance Procedure
 - Disciplinary Procedure
 - Points of Contact
 - Notice period
 - ii. Sole Female/Male Workers
 - iii. Sickness Policy
 - iv. Automatic Enrolment and Pensions
 - v. Professional Grading and Banding
 - vi. Salary
 - vii. Expenses and Mileage payments
 - viii. Holidays (both paid and unpaid)
 - ix. Timesheet authorisation (insurance implications)
 - x. Working from home (HSE assessment)
 - xi. Use of private mobile and home telephones
 - xii. Internet access policy
 - xiii. Methods and dates of assessments
 - xiv. Confidentiality

The Committee agreed that it would review the information and a meeting will be held in January 2016 to discuss any proposals.

The Committee noted that any changes/variations to the existing contracts of the Finance Officer and the Clerk must be with their full agreement.

The Finance Officer and the Clerk were asked if they had any concerns:

- a. The Clerk expressed concern that the Council was not clear about the roles and responsibilities of the Finance Officer and the Clerk. She asked if this could be addressed.
- b. The Council needs a Critical List of passwords, procedures, telephone numbers etc in the event that if one or other of the officers is unable to work the functions of the Council can continue. The Finance Officer and the Clerk will draw up a list.

6. Local Government Pay Scales

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The Finance Officer circulated copies of the latest National Association of Local Councils/Society of Local Council Clerk Scales.

7. **Pay, Hours and Conditions** of the Parish Clerk and Finance Officer

This will be discussed at the next meeting.

8. **Grievance, Discipline and Complaints Policies**

These will be discussed at the next meeting.

9. **Agenda items for next meeting**

To be arranged.

The meeting **RECOMMENDS** that the Terms of Reference and the approach proposed by the Personnel Sub-Committee to review the Officers Conditions of Service be accepted.

FGP.7.11.15

Legal Services: The Finance Officer brought to the meeting the problem of resolving the issue of the legal charges in connection with the Underlease with APC Care Ltd of the Old Surgery, recently completed. The Finance Officer felt that the F&GP should be able to recommend to Full Council a way to move forward with this matter, by either paying the accounts in full, or limiting the amount to be paid or to take some other course of action. The costs charged, net of VAT had amounted to £4989.00, where it had been envisaged the costs would be approx. £2,000.

Councillor Stewart said that Solicitors had to send to their clients a letter of engagement, together with an estimate of the costs. The Solicitor should be monitor the costs and if the value of the estimate is likely to be exceeded the Client has to be informed of any addition to that estimate. In a situation where a Client disputes the costs being charged by a Solicitor, the Client may engage The Law Society to arbitrate in the matter, and 'cost' the file of the Solicitor. The resultant valuation by The Law Society becomes the agreed amount payable. Councillor Stewart proposed that the Finance Officer and the Clerk look through the Council's file, identify all relative correspondence, Terms and Conditions, estimates etc., and report back to the next meeting of the F&GP Committee, when appropriate action can be assessed and recommended. The meeting **RECOMMENDS** to Full Council that this action be taken.

FGP.8.11.15

Risk Register and Disaster Recovery Plan: Councillor Bradshaw introduced the provision of not only overcoming fires, floods but also other risks or incidents such as the sudden departure of the Clerk or Finance Officer, and the access to the Council's records in the form of documentation, computer data, etc. Such Registers identify the potential risk, the likelihood of it occurring, the severity of its impact on the organisation and an assessment of its 'gross' risk the organisation. The Register will also identify any control procedures that are in place and identify any actions required and the personnel involved in those actions.

Councillor Nash referred to a LCAS seminar which he and the Finance Officer attended which covered 'Business Continuity Planning', which is all part of the same area. Councillor Bradshaw suggested that all Councillors and Officers should have a 'brainstorming' exercise to identify as many 'risks' as possible that could impact on the Parish Council. Councillor Nash asked if this could not be achieved by 'brainstorming' sessions within the current Committee System, rather than trying to do this at one meeting or workgroup.

The meeting agreed and **RECOMMENDS** that these Registers are important and that the idea of 'brainstorming' sessions by individual Committees was a better way to approach the subject. The meeting further **RECOMMENDS** that each Committees works towards a deadline for submission of a schedule or list of perceived 'risks' by 30th June 2016 for consideration.

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FGP.9.11.15 **Tender Process:** The Finance Officer updated the meeting on the newly introduced Tendering process. The tendering advert has been published on the Herstmonceux website, and on the noticeboards within the parish. An attempt to place the advert in the local newspapers resulted in charges in excess of £700, and were, therefore, cancelled after having consulted Councillors.

All existing Contractors were sent Tender forms with a covering letter. Tenders are to be received no later than NOON on 4 December 2015, and will be kept in the Council's safe until the appointed Councillors and Finance Officer meet.

The meeting **RECOMMENDS** that Councillors Bradshaw, Nash, and Stewart, together with the Finance Officer officially open and record all tenders received and report to the December meeting of the F&GP Committee who will recommend acceptance of appropriate tenders to Full Council. This will enable the Annual Estimates to reflect the agreed tender costs, as accepted by Council. A meeting of this Tender group has been arranged for 5pm on 4 December 2015 at the Village Information Centre.

FGP.10.11.15 **Close of Meeting:** There being no other business, the Chairman, Councillor Mrs Angear thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 21.48pm