

HERSTMONCEUX PARISH COUNCIL

Agenda Item: Committee Reports – F&GP

Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on **Tuesday 02 February 2016** 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.

FIN.1.02.16 **APOLOGIES:** None.

FIN.2.02.16 **DECLARATIONS of INTERESTS:**

Councillor Mrs. J. Angear – Herstmonceux Village Hall

Councillor M. Goodsell – small contracts (various)

Councillor I. Stewart – Herstmonceux Village Hall.

FIN.3.02.16 **DISPENSATION REQUESTS:** None.

FIN.4.02.16 **CURRENT YEAR EXPENDITURE:**

The Finance Officer reported that he had received a written quotation to clear the bank opposite the entrance to the Village Hall/Surgery/Pharmacy site, adjacent to Hailsham Road from S.R.L. Services in the sum of £220 plus VAT. The carrying out of the work will not be undertaken until the residents living adjacent to the bank have been consulted regarding any 'sentimental' shrubs or bushes that may have been planted along the bank.

The Finance Officer read a letter from the Village Information Centre in reply to the Parish Council seeking permission to install a defibrillator on the outside of the building. The Centre gave its permission subject to the unit being sited on the left hand side of the Parish Office, and that any electrical requirements became the responsibility of the Parish Council. The Finance Officer reminded the meeting that the Parish Council had received a sum of £2185 in December 2014 from the Wealden Community Dividend fund, for the provision of defibrillator(s). It was **RECOMMENDED to FULL COUNCIL** that the Parish Council obtain estimates for the electrical work required once it had ascertained which defibrillator unit it wanted to purchase.

Proposed: Councillor Stewart; Seconded: Councillor Bradshaw; All in favour.

The Finance Officer brought to the meeting that the Memberships of Officers to the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) were now due. The Parish Council would not be expected to renew the membership fees of the current Clerk, due to her retirement on 31 March 2016, but that the renewal membership fee for the Finance Officer amounted to £103 has become due. The meeting agreed that it was important that Officers should belong to a Professional body and, therefore, **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the Finance Officer's membership fees for the ensuing year is paid by the Council.

Proposed: Councillor Nash; Seconded: Councillor Goodsell; All in favour.

The Chairman brought to the attention of the meeting an email received from Wellers Law Group in response to the Parish Council's letter of complaint of 21 December 2015. The email sets out that Ian Davison had confirmed that the underlease had been a difficult and protracted matter, but had also confirmed that he had kept the Parish Council informed. The accounts rendered had given the Parish Council an opportunity to raise any queries, and that the Parish Council are

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aware of the amount of time taken to bring the matter to the satisfactory conclusion, resulting in a tenancy. Wellers Group had taken the Clerk's letter of 21 December as a 'comment' rather than as a complaint, and asking the Parish Council for "...the desired outcome the Council wants from your letter?".

The meeting discussed the content at some length, and **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the Finance Officer draft a letter from the Clerk on behalf of the Parish Council setting out all the relevant financial facts, stating that the matter was not dealt with properly in accordance with the Wellers Group 'Terms of Business', and asking what the Wellers Group would offer the Parish Council to draw the matter to a satisfactory conclusion.

Proposed: Councillor Stewart; Seconded: Councillor Bradshaw; All in favour.

FIN.5.02.16

STANDING ORDERS / FINANCIAL REGULATIONS: The Finance Officer had been asked to look through a partly completed review of the Parish Council's Standing Orders and in particular to references to finance and to the Financial Regulations. The Finance Officer pointed out that the cross referencing in the review document, as presented to him, was incorrect in every case and would need to be corrected prior to the acceptance by Full Council.

The Finance Officer was of the opinion that the Standing Orders need not reflect all the various paragraphs relevant to finance as these were set out in the Financial Regulations. The Finance Officer felt that the Standing Orders, where necessary, should refer to the Financial Regulations but not contain long paragraphs relating to finance.

The Finance Officer asked that paragraph 16 – The Responsible Finance Officer, as set out in the model Standing Orders issued by NALC, be inserted. The proposed Accounts and Accounting Statements are agreed. Much of the other paragraphs are set out in full in the Council's Financial Regulations.

The meeting, therefore, **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the Finance Officer's observations should be taken into account during the current review of Standing Orders.

The meeting indicated its acceptance to this.

FIN.6.02.16

MEMBERS ALLOWANCES: The Finance Officer circulated a copy of the Wealden Parish Remuneration Panel on Town and Parish Councillor Allowances for 2016-17. The Finance Officer set out for the meeting the background to the Members Allowance Scheme stating who could or could not claim. The Panel reviews and lays down the maximum allowances which Town & Parish Councils may pay to their Members. The Finance Officer directed the meeting to the maximum Members Allowances for Herstmonceux Parish Council which were:

Members Basic Allowance: £154 per annum

Chairman's Allowance: £266 per annum

The Parish Council currently pays a Basic Allowance of £145 per annum, and a Chairman's Allowance of £250 per annum.

The Panel also recommends levels of travel and subsistence allowances which the Council has normally accepted, but has never received a claim for from any of its Members.

The meeting discussed the Panel's report, and **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the Parish Council pays to its Members all allowances in accordance with the Panel's recommendations for Herstmonceux Parish Council.

Proposed: Councillor Stewart; Seconded: Councillor Mrs. Kenward; All in favour.

FIN.7.02.16

HERSTMONCEUX PARISH COUNCIL ACTION SCHEDULE 2016-17: The Finance Officer had reviewed and updated the Action Schedule for 2016-17 and

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had circulated this for discussion, via email. The Finance Officer had devised the schedule on the basis of the Full Council reviewing and accepting a new committee structure, which had not yet happened. The Schedule was an ongoing document and had been devised as a reference document to both Members and Officers to refer to for meeting dates, items that the Council must consider, when it is considering them, to add or delete items as required, and for the Officers as 'aide memoir' for the production of reports, review documents, policies etc.

- FIN.8.02.16** **BANKING PROVISION – Update:** The Finance Officer reported that due to other Parish Council work he had just begun to look at bank providers. Other local councils within the area are or have just been through a similar exercise and the Finance Officer has been able to ascertain from them ideas on the provision of levels of authorisation that are required in connection with online banking. It is the intension of the Finance Officer to write to various banking organisations stating the financial transactions of the Parish Councils and what its requirements would be in respect of payment of accounts via online banking and levels of authorisation, to ascertain costs to the Council. It was hoped that a report can be brought to this Committee in two to three months for its consideration.
- FIN.9.02.16** **Close of Meeting:** There being no other business, the Chairman, Councillor Mrs Angear thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 20.45pm