

HERSTMONCEUX PARISH COUNCIL

Agenda Item: Committee Reports – F&GP

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on **Tuesday 05 April 2016** at Herstmonceux Village Hall, Herstmonceux.

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

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

Members of the Public: None.

FIN.01.04.16 APOLOGIES: None.

FIN.02.04.16 DECLARATIONS of INTERESTS:

Councillor Mrs. Angear: Herstmonceux Village Hall, Herstmonceux Bowls Club
Councillor Goodsell: Various small maintenance contracts.
Councillor Stewart: Mrs C. Harrison (New Clerk)

FIN.03.04.16 DISPENSATION REQUESTS: None received

FIN.04.04.16 CURRENT YEAR EXPENDITURE:

The RFO reported that he had been in contact with Mrs Gardiner of APC Care Ltd, accepting her offer to supply appropriate loft insulation material (Totalling 300mm in depth), and informing her that the Council would be engaging a suitable contractor / Odd Job person to install the insulation. Mrs Gardiner was very grateful.

The RFO again reminded the meeting that once the Committee system had been sorted out that each Committee were to bring forward a fully costed and detailed report on each item that had been provisionally included in the current year's annual estimates, for the Council to adopt and where required adopt as Council Policy.

FIN.05.04.16 PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT: The report of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on the 30 March 2016, was discussed by the meeting.

Locum Clerk: The approved employment of the Locum Clerk had been for the period 22 March to 06 May 2016, but the Sub-Committee would recommend that this is extended on a rolling basis up to the end of June, if necessary.

Staff Appraisals: The RFO asked Councillor Stewart, the Councillor nominated to carry out the RFO Appraisal, for some dates that would be convenient to him and the RFO would select a date mutually acceptable.

Appointment of New Clerk: This would be discussed under item 12 of the Agenda.

Councillor Bradshaw referred to item 7.2 on the Personnel Sub-Committee report. The item being highly confidential and sensitive, the RFO was asked to leave the meeting at 19.40, and was asked to return to the meeting at 19.55 after the item had been discussed.

Auto-Enrolment: Councillor Bradshaw asked the RFO if he had suggested to the Parish Council that the introduction of a pension scheme, under Auto-Enrolment, should be brought forward. The RFO stated that the staging date for Herstmonceux

HERSTMONCEUX PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Council was 01 February 2017, but in his experience he had noted that various Town and Parish Councils, to whom he deals with under a Payroll Bureau, were bringing forward the introduction of their pension schemes. One Parish Council whose staging date was 01 August 2016, had brought their pension scheme introduction forward to 01 April 2016, another whose staging date was 01 October 2016, had implemented and backdated its pension scheme to 01 April 2015.

The meeting was of the opinion that now the Parish Council had a new Clerk, that a pension scheme should be brought in as soon as possible. The RFO advised the meeting that there were numerous pension schemes on the market being sold to conform with Auto-Enrolment, and the first thing that the Council must do is to choose one. The bottom of the list was NEST (National Employment Savings Trust) that phases in employee and employer pension contributions over time starting at 1%. At the top is the LGPS (Local Government Pension Scheme) which is a CARE (Career Average Revalued Earnings) Scheme, which is the Local Government pension scheme used by all Principal Authorities and many Town & Parish Councils. The Parish Council would have to make a Resolution to become an employer under the LGPS and have it agreed by The East Sussex Pension Fund. The current employers rate is 21.10% and the employee pays anything from 05.50% to 12.50% according to salary received.

Whereas NEST was very cheap, from the employers' point of view, the benefits that an employee would derive from the scheme would be minimal. The LGPS being the 'Rolls Royce' scheme the employee would have very good benefits and the Scheme provided Death in Service, Ill Health Retirement, Spouse / Partner, and Child benefits, where many on the market would not.

The RFO continued by saying that, in his opinion, the Council should not just be looking at the costs of a pension scheme, to determine which scheme to adopt and implement, but to look to the future and ask itself does it want to attract professionally qualified staff or someone who can just 'do the job', because if it is the intention to get the best qualified staff in the future, those prospective applicants will be looking for the best 'package' available to them, the pension scheme being a substantial part of any recruitment package offered.

The meeting took on board the comments of the RFO and **RECOMMENDED to FULL COUNCIL** that the RFO should present a report to June F&GP for consideration, outlining a top Scheme (LGPS) and a middle of the road Scheme, but ignoring NEST.

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

FIN.06.04.16 **STANDING ORDERS / FINANCIAL REGULATIONS:** It was reported to the meeting that the group dealing with the review of the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations had undertaken most of the work and it was envisaged that the revised documentation would be available for discussion at the May F&GP Committee meeting.

FIN.07.04.16 **POLICIES:** The RFO circulated copies of Policies that were required by the Internal Auditor and which had been drafted by Mrs McInnes, prior to her retirement. The Policies covered the following:

1. Communications Policy
2. Document and Retention Policy
3. Employee Code of Conduct
4. Grants Policy

HERSTMONCEUX PARISH COUNCIL

5. Gifts and Hospitality Policy
6. Consultation Policy
7. Recording and Reporting of Council Meetings Policy

The meeting felt that these policies should be referred to the Standing Order / Financial Regulations Group and brought forward to the May F&GP Committee, having been considered by the Group. The RFO was instructed to forward all Policies to Councillor Mrs Alder, as Chairman.

The meeting also felt that the Locum Clerk should also be asked for any of her comments on the prospective policies and the Locum Clerk report to the Group, as soon as possible.

Proposed: Councillor Bradshaw; Seconded: Councillor Nash; All Councillors in favour.

FIN.08.04.16 HERSTMONCEUX PARISH COUNCIL ACTION SCHEDULE: The Chairman, Councillor Mrs Angear, referred to the Action Schedule and stated that this needed to be kept up to date for both Councillors and Employees use.

FIN.09.04.16 BANKING PROVISION: The matter is in hand and it is the intention to bring a report to a future meeting of F&GP as soon as possible.

FIN.010.04.16 DEFIBRILLATORS: The Chairman advised the meeting that the professional advice of Doctor Simmons had been sought in respect of which model Defibrillators the Parish Council should be purchasing. The recommended model was the Philips HeartStart FRx Defibrillator (Model No 861304), priced at £1,145.00 ex VAT. In addition, it was thought best to house the Defibrillators in wall cabinets at each location at an additional cost of £340.00 ex VAT each. It is understood that each unit must have a heat pad with it.

The Parish Council had received a sum of £2,185.00 from the Wealden Community Fund, and it was anticipated that the Parish Council would have to put an additional £1,400.00 to cover additional items and the installation costs. Such additional amounts could be sought from alternative funding or from General Reserves.

The Chairman reported that the VIC had given permission to have one unit installed to the left-hand side of the Parish Office Door/window, and the Merrie Harriers Public House had agreed to have the other unit installed on the outside wall of the premises.

The meeting discussed the matter further and it is **RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL** that two Philips HeartStart FRx Defibrillators (Model No. 861304), two Wall Cabinets are purchased and installed in Herstmonceux and Cowbeech at an estimated cost of £2970 plus VAT, plus installation costs.

Proposed: Councillor Stewart; Seconded: Councillor Goodsell; All Councillors in favour.

The RFO will investigate of Wealden District Council whether there is any funding available for the installation of the two units.

FIN.011.04.16 INFORMATION SIGNS: The RFO referred to the email circulated by Mrs McInnes on 24 March 2016, showing the wording and design of the Information Signs to the Parish Office and Village Information Centre. The sign is to be installed on land at the Brewers Arms Public House, permission having been sought and granted, at a cost of 246.77, plus VAT. The Village Information Centre have stated that it will

HERSTMONCEUX PARISH COUNCIL

make a contribution towards the cost.

The meeting discussed the matter further and it is **RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL** to accept the quotation.

Proposed Councillor Stewart; Seconded: Councillor Goodsell; All Councillors in favour.

FIN.012.04.16 APPOINTMENT OF CLERK: The proposed letter of appointment, as drafted by SALC, and the Contract of Employment for the new Clerk had been circulated by the RFO to all Committee Members. The only item that was required to be altered was the emphasis on work place from home to the Parish Office. The letter of appointment, item 'Place of Work' to be amended to read "The Parish Office and/or home, but 3 hours, 1 day a week must be worked in the Parish Office, 4 The Old Forge, Gardner Street, Herstmonceux, when it will be open to the public."

Mrs. Harrison, the new Clerk had informed the Chairman that her preferred day of regular attendance at the office would be a Thursday morning between 10.00 and 13.00 hours.

The Chairman stated that Mrs. Harrison would be prepared to start on Monday 18 April 2016, and take the Minutes of the SLR meeting, and be able to take Minutes together with the Locum Clerk at the April Full Council meeting.

The meeting, having amended the letter of Appointment were in agreement with the proposed Contract of Employment, which will go forward to be ratified at an Extraordinary Full Council meeting to be held on Tuesday 12 April 2016.

FIN.013.04.16 FINGERPOST – CHURCH ROAD junction with LOWER ROAD: Councillor Mrs Alder had prepared a report on the fingerpost that had recently been replaced and re-sited at the junction of Church Road with Lower Road, Herstmonceux. The meeting was told that the Parish Council were not in a position to decide to re-site a fingerpost without seeking the permission of the East Sussex County Council. Councillor Mrs Alder had been in correspondence with Mr. Peter Sutton, Asset Technician, ESCC, who had outlined the now options open to the Parish Council. These being:

1. Move the post back to its original location at the expense of the parish council.
2. Remove the post completely and replace it with a metal passively safe sign in accordance with legislative requirements.
3. Undertake a risk assessment to establish whether the new location is suitable. (Considering the above legislative requirements, this will not be a viable option).

Councillor Mrs Kenward informed the meeting that things had moved on and that Councillor Alder had spoken to Mr. Sutton stating that the original position was in a ditch and not at all suitable for the fingerpost and that the new position was much better and less likely to be hit or damaged by agricultural vehicles entering/exiting Lower Road. Councillor Mrs Kenward reported that local residents had supported the new site.

The meeting noted that the re-siting of the fingerpost was set out in the quotation received by JAKK Country Furniture Designs, and as an approved contractor recommended by the ESCC must have known that re-siting the fingerpost involved seeking permission of the ESCC.

Councillor Alder had obtained a figure to move the fingerpost back to its original position from Jakk Country Furniture Designs at £80.

HERSTMONCEUX PARISH COUNCIL

The meeting **RECOMMENDS TO FULL COUNCIL** that Mr. Sutton be asked to undertake the necessary risk assessment, at no cost to the Council, if the fingerpost requires moving back to its original position then Jakk Country Furniture Designs should be engaged to do this at no cost to the Council, on the basis of inaccurate advice.

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

FIN.014.04.16 CLOSE OF MEETING: There being no other business, the Chairman, Councillor Mrs. Angear thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 21.07pm