

Agenda Item: Committee Reports – F&GP

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on **Tuesday 06 September 2016** at Herstmonceux Village Hall, Herstmonceux.

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

S. Goacher, RFO, took the Minutes,

Members of the Public: None.

Councillor I. Stewart took the Chair in the absence of Councillor Bradshaw.

FIN.01.09.16 **APOLOGIES:** Councillor M. Bradshaw (Chairman).

FIN.02.09.16 **DECLARATIONS of INTERESTS:**

Councillor Mrs. Angear: Herstmonceux Village Hall, Herstmonceux Bowls Club, Angears Builders.

Councillor Goodsell: Various small maintenance contracts.

Councillor Stewart: Herstmonceux Village Hall.

FIN.03.09.16 **DISPENSATION REQUESTS:** None received

FIN.04.09.16 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS:** None.

FIN.05.09.16 **CURRENT YEAR EXPENDITURE:**

1. Councillor Nash brought to the attention of the meeting the vandalism recently encountered with the Youth Shelter, where the Perspex was smashed. Monster Play Ltd would supply the armoured Perspex and fit for a cost of £1,000. Councillor Nash had obtained a quote from Agrifactors (Southern) Ltd of £490 plus VAT for supply and fitting armoured Perspex. Discussion took place regarding the possibility of replacing the Perspex with metal, but the shelter frame would have to be strengthened, and this was perceived as unreasonably costly. It was proposed that Agrifactors (Southern) Ltd quote of £490 plus VAT be accepted. Proposed Councillor Mrs. Kenward; Seconded: Councillor Mrs. Angear; All Councillors in favour.
2. The RFO had received a request from the Clerk to purchase a commercial shredder for the Parish Office. The RFO stated that, in his opinion, there were many confidential draft documents which, if not shredded, could inadvertently get into the public domain at no fault of Officers. Current arrangements appear to be normal waste bin disposal. The RFO had sought approx. costs of 'Fellowes' shredders, which would be fit for purpose, at costs between £105 and £140. The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that a suitable shredder, in consultation with the Clerk, be purchased as soon as possible. Proposed: Councillor Mrs. Angear; Seconded: Councillor Mrs. Kenward; All Councillors in favour.

FIN.06.09.16 **PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT:** No Report.

FIN.07.09.16 **ANNUAL ESTIMATES: Revised 2016-17, Original 2017-18, and subsequent two years:** The RFO had prepared Annual Estimate Working Sheets, which were distributed to Chairman of each Committee

for their Work Groups, and to each individual Parish Councillor.

Attached to each Annual Estimate Working Sheet were copies of the relevant pages from the Estimates approved by the Parish Council in January 2016, in setting the current year's Precept.

The RFO explained that all current Special Projects and Reserve provisions would remain unaltered unless the Committee returns on its Estimate Working sheets that these need to be amended, rescheduled or deleted.

The Working Sheets are required to be returned to the RFO by no later than 30 September 2016, for discussion by F&GP Committee at its meeting on 04 October 2016.

FIN.08.09.16 URBAN VERGE-CUTTING TENDER 2017-18: The RFO brought to the attention of the committee that the Parish Council must go out to tender for the urban verge-cutting contract for 2017-18. This contract, unlike all other Parish Council maintenance contracts, can only be entered into on a yearly basis because of the rules imposed by the East Sussex County Council. The RFO had updated the tender document to reflect the revised contractor requirements set by East Sussex County Council, thus ensuring a contribution from the County Council to offset part of the verge-cutting costs. The meeting agreed that the RFO may start the tender process.

Councillors asked if there was a possibility to obtain a map from the East Sussex County Council showing any hedgerows that the County would expect its contractors would have to cut. The Clerk, stated that she would bring this matter up at the next SLR meeting scheduled for Tuesday 13 September 2016.

The Twitten, leading from Gardiner Street up into the recreation ground, was acknowledged as the property of the East Sussex County Council, and the meeting wondered if the Parish Council could take this over. At present the Parish Council maintains the vegetation alongside the Twitten, but if it were to take over the Twitten then the maintenance of the tarmac service would become the responsibility of the Parish Council.

The Twitten, being the property of the East Sussex County Council, the Parish Council having maintained the verges etc., and cutting the hedges on occasions, the meeting wondered if the County Council would consider giving the Parish Council a financial contribution for its upkeep. The Clerk, stated that she would bring this matter up at the next SLR meeting scheduled for Tuesday 13 September 2016.

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

The owner of the Old Post Office has complained that the hedge alongside the property and the Twitten needs cutting and that the Parish Council should be cutting this. The meeting discussed that hedge-cutting was the responsibility of the property owners, not the Parish Council. Councillor Goodsell stated he had cut this before, sometimes as part of his work for the Parish Council, sometimes for the occupier. The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the hedge alongside the property known as The Old Post Office should be cut by the Parish Council this year, but that the Clerk write to the owners stating that the hedge is their responsibility and that the Parish Council will not cut the hedge in future.

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

There had been complaints that the hedges alongside the footpath from Hailsham Road up past the Village Green (Denefield) had not be cut this year. The RFO stated that he thought that it was under a contract, and he would investigate and contact the contractors accordingly.

FIN.09.09.16 ANNUAL RETURN: The RFO informed the meeting that the External Auditors had signed off the final accounts for 2015-16. The External Auditors only comment was that the Annual Return had not be signed in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015: Section 2 was not signed by the Responsible Finance Officer before approval. The RFO admitted that he had inserted the incorrect date on the Annual Return.

The RFO had displayed the Notice of the Conclusion of Audit and had displayed this and copies of the Annual Return on Noticeboards and the Parish Council's website.

FIN.10.09.16 INTERNAL AUDIT PROVISION: The RFO brought to the attention of the meeting that the Parish Council should be reviewing the provision of Internal Audit.

1. The RFO suggested to the meeting that the current appointment of Mr Peter Frost should be confirmed for the Internal Audit of the 2016-17 accounts.
2. The RFO stated that the Parish Council had no Policy to review its Internal Audit. The Governance and Accountability of Local Councils recommends 'Authorities should from time to time carry out a review of the effectiveness of their overall internal audit arrangements. The review should take place at least once every three years and also in the year of any change of internal audit provider or responsible finance officer. Any review should balance the authority's internal audit needs and usage.

The review should be designed to assure the authority that it has maintained the standards of an adequate and effective internal audit of its risk management, control and governance processes. It should include, as a minimum, making an assessment of each of the following:

- the scope of internal audit;
- independence;
- competence;
- relationships with the clerk and the authority; and
- audit planning and reporting.

The review should be undertaken by the authority.

Authorities may wish to set up a small working party to carry out the review or utilise an existing committee. Whatever approach is followed the results should be reported to a full meeting of the authority.

As with any review, it should be evidence based. Wherever possible this should be gathered throughout the year. Sources may include:

- previous review and action plan;

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- annual report by internal audit;
- periodic reports from internal audit, including internal audit plan, monitoring reports, and the results of any investigations;
- any reports by the external auditor; and
- the results of any other external reviews of internal control.

If the review identifies any areas for development or change in internal audit, an action plan should be produced for the authority to manage the remedial process. The action plan should set out the areas of improvement required, any proposed remedial actions, the people responsible for delivering improvement, and the deadlines for completion of the actions.'

The meeting discussed the matter and **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the appointment of Mr Peter Frost is confirmed for the 2016-17 accounts and that Councillor Bradshaw, Councillor Mrs. Kenward and the RFO should form an Internal Audit working party to undertake the recommended review, formulate an appropriate Policy and report to Full Council by 31 March 2017.

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

FIN.11.09.16 FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY: The RFO distributed copies of the Financial Transparency codes for Smaller Authorities (Less than £25,000) and for Larger Authorities (Greater than £200,000). Herstmonceux Parish Council falls between these two criteria with a turnover of approx. £85,000. The Transparency codes outline the information which the Parish Council should be publishing via its Minutes, various documents and on its website, to bring this into the public domain. The Officers have already made some alterations in, for example, recording the full Payments of Accounts report in the Minutes of the Full Council.

Herstmonceux being in the mid-range of the criteria, would be expected to work towards the Transparency Code for the Larger Authorities (Greater than £200,000). The meeting discussed the matter and agreed that the Parish Council must ensure that the code should be complied with and that the RFO and Clerk go through the appropriate Transparency Code and identify any items which the Parish Council are not complying with and report back.

FIN.12.09.16 RISK & DISASTER POLICY: The RFO circulated a copy of the Council's Risk Management Policy, last reviewed in February 2015. The RFO referred to Councillor Bradshaw's advice that the Risk Management Policy should be extended to include Disaster Recovery, thus becoming a Risk and Disaster Policy. Committees have all be asked to raise possible 'Disaster' scenarios within their areas of jurisdiction and submit them to the F&GP Committee for inclusion in the new Policy. Members were asked to have ready input at its next meeting, taking into consideration that the F&GP Committee encompasses the management of the Old Surgery and Village Hall sites.

FIN.13.09.16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: The next meeting of the F&GP Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 04th October 2016, commencing at 7.30pm.

FIN.14.09.16 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING: The RFO records that the following items will appear on the agenda for the next meeting:

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Annual Estimates: To receive requirements from all other Committees and Work Groups, including the F&GP Committee.

Risk & Disaster Policy: Items from F&GP Committee and incorporate all items from other Committees.

FIN.15.09.16 CLOSE OF MEETING: There being no other business, the Chairman, Councillor Stewart thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 20.45 pm