

HERSTMONCEUX PARISH COUNCIL

Agenda Item: Committee Reports – Finance & General Purposes Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **Finance and General Purposes Committee** held on **Tuesday 07 February 2017** at Herstmonceux Village Hall, Herstmonceux.

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

Mrs Clare Harrison, Clerk, attended. S. Goacher, RFO, took the Minutes,

Members of the Public: None.

FIN.01.02.17 APOLOGIES: Councillor Mrs J. Angear (Other Commitment).

FIN.02.02.17 DECLARATIONS of INTERESTS:

Councillor Bradshaw: Campaign to Protect Rural England, Herstmonceux Business Association.

Councillor M. Goodsell: Small Contracts (Various).

Councillor I. Stewart: Herstmonceux Village Hall.

FIN.03.02.17 DISPENSATION REQUESTS: None received

FIN.04.02.17 PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS: None.

FIN.05.02.17 CURRENT YEAR EXPENDITURE:

1. **Allotments: Lease of site at Greenway Fruit Farm, Stunts Green, Herstmonceux:**

Councillor Bradshaw brought forward from the Amenities Committee the recommendation to renew the Lease for a further ten years, on the expiration of the current Lease on 28 February 2019. An initial approach to the owner, Mr G. Love, has resulted in the offer to the Parish Council to renew for a further period of ten years at £800 per annum, as per the current Lease. The Clerk was asked if she was happy for Kent County Council Legal Services to undertake a 'Continuation Lease', which would need to be Registered. The Clerk gave an affirmative answer.

The meeting discussed the matter and agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that the Parish Council enter a Continuation Lease for a period 01 March 2019 to 28 February 2029 with Mr Love, at an annual lease payment of £800 per annum, with no increases.

Proposed: Councillor Bradshaw, Seconded: Councillor Nash, All Members in favour.

2. **Finger Posts: Annual Cleaning:**

Councillor Mrs. Kenward brought to the meeting that the Highways Working Group, through the Amenities Committee, had sought quotes for an annual clean of all twelve Finger Posts within the parish. Councillor Mrs. Kenward suggested to the meeting that the Finger Posts should be cleaned on an annual basis during the months of April and May, after the winter season and before the summer season started. The cleaning would be part of the maintenance of the posts and would aid the annual inspection of each post by the working group.

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Councillor Mrs. Kenward had furnished the RFO with two quotations to undertake an annual cleaning of these posts.

Mr. P. J. Hazell – Initial clean of each post @ £15.00 per post = £180.00

Thereafter: £10.00 per post = £120.00

Mr D. Richardson Trading as 'Extreme Clean' @ £5 per post = £60.00

The meeting discussed the matter and it was agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to accept Mr Richardson's quotation of £60.00, in addition it was **RECOMMENDED** that this be added to the Parish Council's list of Small Contracts, and that an annual contract should be entered into each year until 31 March 2019, when such a contract would become a three-year contract in line with other Parish Council's contracts.

Proposed: Councillor Mrs. Kenward, Seconded: Councillor Nash, All Members in favour.

3. **Bank, opposite to the Village Hall, adjacent to Hailsham Road (A271):**

The Parish Council, having written to residents in Buckwell Rise, regarding the bank adjacent to Hailsham Road, the meeting authorises the RFO to issue an official Works Order to the contractor to carry out the clearing of the bank, but that the contractor to contact and meet with Councillors Mrs. Kenward and Nash, prior to carrying out the work.

4. **British Telecom:**

The RFO brought to the attention of the meeting that BT had informed the Parish Council that there was to be an increase of 6% in its line rental as from 01 March 2017. This would increase expenditure by approx. £17 per year. The meeting suggested that the Officers investigate the costs of moving its telephone and Broadband provision to Plusnet, which was perceived to be a cheaper option for the Council.

5. **Pathway adjacent to the A271 between Herstmonceux to The Truggery (Cricketers Lane):**

Councillor Bradshaw had submitted a report on the condition of the pathway from the Village out to the Truggery, adjacent to the A271 highway. The meeting referred the report to the Amenities Committee to deal with.

6. **Personnel Sub-Committee:**

A meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee was convened and met prior to the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting. Councillor Bradshaw gave a verbal report and acquainted the meeting with the recommendations to the Finance & General Purposes Committee from that meeting.

- a) **The Clerk:** The Sub-Committee asked that the Clerk submit a timesheet for all additional hours worked to 30 January 2017. The Clerk's hours would then be reviewed every three months.
- b) **The RFO:** The Sub-Committee undertook a review of the RFO's Local Scale and it was recommended that the Local Scale should be revised as from 01 April 2017 as follows: SCP 27 (Minimum) to SCP 32 (Maximum), and that the RFO should progress incrementally to SCP 27

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wef 01 April 2017.

Both Officers incremental progression on their respective Local Scales, in future, would be subject to a satisfactory report, via the Council's Staff Appraisal system.

- c) **Clerk to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee:** It was anticipated by the Sub-Committee that the employment of the Clerk to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee would be for a limited period of months, as the Plan was getting towards its final stages.

The meeting agreed with these recommendations and **RECOMMENDS TO FULL COUNCIL** that the above be approved, and implemented with immediate effect.

Proposed: Councillor Bradshaw, Seconded Councillor Stewart, All Members in favour.

FIN.06.02.17 HIGHWAY VERGE CUTTING CONTRACT 2017-18:

The RFO brought to the meeting three unopened tenders for the Highway Verge Cutting Contract **HPC/HIGHWAY/2017-18**, received by the deadline of 12 noon on 07 February 2017. Councillor Bradshaw opened each of the envelopes presented, in the presence of those attending, and the RFO recorded the following:

Contractors:	Total
Countrywide Grounds Maintenance Ltd - Withdrawn	£ 0.00
Green Oak Services – No Tender Received	£ 0.00
Ide Verde Ltd	£ 3,808.00
Orchard Landscapes Ltd	£ 3,896.40
SRL Maintenance Services	£ 6,195.00

The meeting looked through the tender documents to ensure that conditions, as far as possible, were being met by all contractors. Discussion took place and it was agreed that the meeting was not able to make any recommendations to Full Council, and it was required that the RFO take up references in respect of Ide Verde Ltd and Orchard Landscapes Ltd, and to feedback these to Members of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, who would meet briefly prior to the next meeting of Full Council, with the intention of being able to make a recommendation at that time.

FIN.07.02.17 FINANCIAL REGULATION REVIEW:

The Chairman asked the RFO why the Parish Council had to have Financial Regulations when there existed the 'Governance and Accountability for Local Councils' (GALC). Councillor Bradshaw continued by stating that commercial organisations would adopt the various financial aspects of the financial guidance that exists and which were relevant to their organisation.

The RFO replied that each Local Council or Principal Authority adopted its own financial procedures encompassing the principals and requirements of GALC and this document became the financial equivalent to Standing Orders, by which the Local Council operates. Financial Regulations, therefore, seek to ensure that the Council conducts its affairs in a way that complies with specific

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statutory provisions, generally accepted accounting principles and professional good practice.

The meeting felt that the matter was of so much importance and of a specific and professional nature that the matter of a review should be delegated to Councillor Bradshaw, as a qualified Accountant, and to the RFO who has a background in Local Government Finance.

The RFO did submit a suggested amendment to the Financial Regulations section on Annual Estimates (Budget) and Forward Planning, bringing in the requirement that all Committees and Working Groups should meet in September and complete the required Estimate working sheets for submission to the RFO by 30 September in each year. Councillor Bradshaw asked this to be amended slightly to read '**by**' September rather than '**in**' September, and that the suggested text be included in Standing Orders.

The meeting discussed the matter further and **RECOMMENDS TO FULL COUNCIL** that a Financial Regulations Review be undertaken by Councillor Bradshaw and the RFO, and that Standing Orders be updated with the suggested wording regards Annual Estimates as amended.

Proposed: Councillor Stewart, Seconded: Councillor Mrs. Kenward, All Members in favour.

FIN.08.02.17 HERSTMONCEUX PARISH COUNCIL ACTION SCHEDULE 2017-18:

The RFO referred to a suggestion by Councillor Mrs. Angear to revive the Parish Council's Annual Action Plan for the ensuing year. The RFO outlined that the idea of the Annual Schedule document was to have one document to which Councillors and Officers could refer and have maintained to ensure that the Council was covering all the work required of the Council. This would ensure that monthly, quarterly reports, regular reviews, Grant awards, annual estimates, interim and annual audits are scheduled and not overlooked

The Schedule would include appendices showing current Dates of Regular meetings, Details of Contracts, Leases, Agreements, Policies, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations. It should become a 'one-stop' reference document for both Councillors and Officers alike, and should be maintained from year to year.

Councillor Mrs. Kenward suggested that such a document would aid any Member joining the Council, a Committee, or Work Group and overcome the feeling of what do we have to do? Councillor Mrs. Kenward continued to say it would also help any newly recruited staff member, in future, to get to grips with their new job.

Councillor Bradshaw wished the Minutes to reflect the thanks to the Clerk and RFO for the idea of such a document, for the work carried out thus far, and for bringing this to the attention of the meeting.

The meeting agreed and it is **RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL** that the Action Schedule document should be introduced, maintained, and updated with input from both Members and Officers, throughout the year. All Members agreed.

FIN.09.02.17 RISK MANGEMENT POLICY:

The RFO brought this to the meeting with the suggestion that each Member look through the document, and that there needed to be added the regular monitoring of Defibrillators. Also, the 'Chairman' featured a lot in the document

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as being responsible for various items, The RFO stated that although it could be argued that the Chairman was overall responsible for the items contained in the document, in fact the responsibilities could and should be delegated at Committee level, wherever possible, so that the Committee Chairman was responsible either individually or together with an Officer.

Councillor Bradshaw asked that members read through the document and be prepared to discuss and review the Policy document at the next meeting.

FIN.10.02.17 VILLAGE HALL / NEW SURGERY ACCESS ROAD:

The Clerk informed the meeting that she would be contacting Kent County Council Legal Services to find out how the matter was proceeding, but had nothing specific to report.

FIN.11.02.17 PHOTOCOPIER PROVISION:

The RFO had circulated electronically a report on the existing photocopier and the offer by Principal for a new machine which would show savings to the Parish Council.

The RFO had prepared a second report, following initial responses from Councillors that the proposed lease period offered of 5 years was too long, and a question of purchasing and maintaining a comparable HP 3 in 1 machine.

The RFO had calculated that the savings of the initial offer with a 5-year lease would be £131.62 per annum on current usage. On a three year lease the Parish Council would incur an increase of £198.22 over the existing costs, on current usage.

The meeting was of the opinion to continue with the existing agreement, which expires on 24 March 2017, subject to the RFO establishing whether there was any in built increases in the costs contained within the existing agreement, if the Parish Council were to continue the agreement past its expiry date. The RFO stated he would ascertain the information and acquaint Members with the answer.

FIN.12.02.17 PEST CONTROL CONTRACT:

The Amenities Committee had referred the matter of the existing Pest Control Contract with Go Pest Ltd to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

It was reported that the boxes were not all being looked at by the contractor, and that the use of traps had been tried as an alternative to poisoning but had not worked.

The Amenities Committee Members perceived that there were no longer any problems with rats at the Allotments site.

The meeting discussed the matter and the general feeling was to terminate the contract as soon as possible. The RFO acquainted the meeting with the terms of the Contract with Go Pest Ltd, made on 01 December 2012, which permitted termination to be given at the end of a quarter, the end of the next quarter being 31 March 2017.

The meeting **RECOMMENDS TO FULL COUNCIL** that the Pest Control contract with Go Pest Ltd be terminated as at 31 March 2017, and that the contractor be asked to clear all boxes from the site on termination of the contract.

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Proposed: Councillor Nash, Seconded: Councillor Stewart, All Members in favour.

FIN.13.02.17 DISASTER PLAN:

Councillor Bradshaw referred this item to the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

FIN.14.02.17 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN:

Councillor Bradshaw had asked the RFO to produce a statement of the costs of the Neighbourhood Plan so far. The RFO had circulated an up to date schedule as from 2012-13 through to 17 January 2017, which had been circulated to all Members of the Committee.

Councillor Bradshaw believed the Parish Council had not been sufficiently monitoring the costs of the Plan and that it was not known exactly what were the outstanding costs of Professional fees from Action in Rural Sussex. The Parish Council through the Steering Committee had enlisted Action in Rural Sussex to advise and carry out certain procedures during the implementation of the Plan, as required, but did not appear to have its finger on the costs involved.

The RFO was asked to contact and discuss the matter with the Clerk to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and establish what Professional fees were outstanding and what may be incurred in future.

FIN.15.02.17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: The next meeting of the F&GP Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 07 March 2017, commencing at 7.30pm.

FIN.16.02.17 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING: The RFO records that the following items will appear on the agenda for the next meeting:

- 1. Personnel Sub-Committee Report – should be a permanent agenda item in future.**
- 2. Risk Management Policy** – to review the Policy, last reviewed in February 2015.
- 3. Village Hall / Surgery Access Road** – update.
- 4. Neighbourhood Plan Costs** – report from RFO / Clerk to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee
- 5. Recreation Ground Car Park Access Road** - update.
- 6. Procurement of Stationery items** – discussion of possible purchasing via Viking Direct
- 7. Identity / Photo ID Badges** – request from Officers
- 8. Herstmonceux Parish Council Action Schedule 2017-18** - update
- 9. Disaster Plan** – devise and implement

FIN.17.02.17 CLOSE OF MEETING: There being no other business, the Chairman, Councillor Bradshaw thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 21.48 pm