

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 March 2017** at Herstmonceux Village Hall, Herstmonceux.

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

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

Members of the Public: None.

FIN.01.03.17 APOLOGIES: Councillor I. Stewart (Annual Leave).

FIN.02.03.17 DECLARATIONS of INTERESTS:

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

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

Councillor M. Goodsell: Small Contracts (Various).

Councillor Nash – Village Information Centre.

FIN.03.03.17 DISPENSATION REQUESTS: None received

FIN.04.03.17 PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS: None.

FIN.05.03.17 PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE REPORT:

The Chairman, Councillor Bradshaw, reported that a meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee had met prior to the Finance & General Purposes (F&GP) Committee to discuss a request from the Clerk to receive payment of untaken Annual Leave for the current leave year. The matter had arisen as the Clerk had mistakenly thought her annual leave entitlement was calculated and had to be taken over the period of her first year of employment, not to the Council's financial year ending on 31 March 2017.

Councillor Bradshaw reminded the meeting that under EU Directives employers should not be paying employees for outstanding leave, and that this situation is monitored by the HMRC within the UK.

The Personnel Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS to F&GP COMMITTEE** that the outstanding leave be paid on this occasion as 'Holiday Pay in Lieu'. The Personnel Sub Committee stated that Officers, and any other employees, must take their Annual Leave entitlement during the leave period 01 April to 31 March in each financial year in future.

It is further **RECOMMENDED** that the RFO maintain a copy of the calculations of Holiday Entitlement for each Officer and any other members of staff in future and that holiday taken is properly requested, authorised by the Chairman of Personnel Sub-Committee, and recorded accordingly.

The **RECOMMENDATIONS** of the Personnel Sub-Committee was accepted by the meeting and are **RECOMMENDED to FULL COUNCIL**, changes to the Annual Leave processes to be brought in as from 01 April 2017.

Proposed: Councillor Bradshaw, Seconded: Councillor Kenward, All members

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in favour.

FIN.06.03.17 CURRENT YEAR EXPENDITURE:

1. Annual Parish Meeting - Finance:

The RFO brought to the meeting for discussion the idea that as well as the Accounts being on the Agenda that the forthcoming Estimates and the intentions of the Council to undertake projects in the forthcoming year should also be presented, and the RFO suggested that this should come from the Chairman of F&GP Committee.

Councillor Nash commented that he thought that the presentations at the Annual Parish Meeting should be undertaken by the Elected Members rather than by the Officers, the Officers being in attendance for information and support only.

Councillor Mrs. Angear thought it right that having increased the precept this year that residents are reassured that the Parish Council has projects in hand and that over the next year certain projects will be started or undertaken.

Further discussion took place, and Councillor Bradshaw agreed that the Chairman of F&GP Committee should present a 'Financial Overview' of the Parish Council in place of a presentation of the Accounts, which were over a year out of date and which were available for any resident to come in and peruse or see on the Parish Council's website.

The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the Annual Parish Meeting's presentation on 'Accounts' be replaced by a presentation on a 'Financial Overview' of the Parish Council at that time, and should be presented by the Chairman of F&GP Committee each year.

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

2. Insurance Provision:

The RFO brought to the meeting that the Clerk had passed to him a letter from an Insurance Broker who were teamed up with Ageas Insurance. The RFO sought the permission of the meeting to commence obtaining insurance quotations for the Parish Council, by providing companies with a copy of the Council's Assets Register. The RFO reminded the meeting that a decision would have to be taken in May as the renewal date for the insurance cover was 01 June in each year.

The meeting agreed with the RFO's suggestions.

3. The Twitten to Recreation Ground:

Councillor Nash brought to the attention of the meeting the condition of the 'Twitten', leading from Gardner Street into and up through the recreation ground. Councillor Nash described the condition of the pathway as 'terrible' for its whole length. Grass has been growing out from the sides of the pathway and in places there is a terrific build-up of mud and other debris washed down from adjoining land.

The meeting discussed the matter and felt that remedial work requirements would exceed the emergency sum of £250 permitted for the Committee to award, so it was agreed that Councillor Nash could obtain quotations from

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suitable contractor(s) to carry out the works required and that this/these quotation(s) should be presented to Full Council on 20 March next for its decision.

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

FIN.07.03.17 RISK MANAGEMENT REVIEW:

1. **The Review:** The RFO circulated to the meeting copies of the Parish Council's Risk Management Policy, last reviewed in February 2015, for a further review.

The RFO suggested that the Policy appeared to place a large amount of emphasis and responsibility on the Chairman of the Parish Council for the various items contained within the Policy. The RFO understood that the Chairman of the Parish Council had an overall responsibility for Parish Council affairs during his/her period of Chairmanship, but suggested that the various responsibilities could be devolved to the Chairman of the various committees, now that the Parish Council had reviewed its administration structure.

The meeting agreed, and went through the various items agreeing to which Chairman would be responsible with or without Officers of the Council, for the various items.

It was further agreed that there should be an item specifically for the overall actions in respect of all the Council's Defibrillators, and that the Risk Management Policy should be referred to the F&GP Committee on a three-monthly basis so that the actions required within the Policy can be monitored, ensuring that all actions are being undertaken throughout each year.

The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** acceptance of the revised Risk Management Policy and changes to its administration.

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

2. **Portable Appliance Testing (PAT):** Arising from the discussion, Councillor Nash brought up the recent PAT testing carried out by MAS Systems on behalf of the Village Information Centre. Councillor Bradshaw and the RFO agreed that this was something that the Parish Council as an employer should have undertaken every two years. The UK Health and Safety Executive along with insurance companies will expect employers to perform PAT testing to ensure that they are compliant with certain regulations including:

- Health and Safety at Work Act of 1974
- The Electricity at Work Regulations of 1989
- The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations of 1998
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations of 1999

The RFO was instructed to issue the necessary Works Order to MAS Systems to undertake the required testing, and in future to undertake this at the same time as the testing for the Village Information Centre, if possible.

The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that Portable Appliance

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Testing be carried out as required to comply.

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

FIN.08.03.17 VILLAGE HALL ACCESS ROAD - UPDATE:

The Clerk stated that she had contacted Kent County Council, who were to produce an update report for Full Council to be held on 20 March next.

FIN.09.03.17 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN COSTS:

The RFO had been asked to produce and circulated to the meeting a copy of a financial statement of anticipated costs of the production of the Neighbourhood Plan, to its conclusion, against the Council's Revised Estimates for 2016/17, and Original Estimates for 2017/18. The report showed that likely costs came within the overall estimates for the periods in question.

Councillor Bradshaw and Councillor Nash stated that the Clerk to the Neighbourhood Plan had announced that the time already estimated for Professional Advice/Assistance was nearly exhausted and that more days would have to be 'bought' from Action in Rural Sussex. The RFO, referring to the estimate from Action in Rural Sussex, informed the meeting that costs of £375 per day would be incurred for additional time. The meeting discussed the matter further and it was envisaged that there was a possibility of exceeding the Councils estimates by approx. £1300 to £1500.

The meeting noted the matter, and would be monitoring any additional work required.

FIN.10.03.17 ACCESS ROAD TO THE RECREATION GROUND CAR PARK:

Councillor Nash had obtained three quotations for the construction of two passing places and general upgrading of the access road to the recreation ground car park. Councillor Nash informed the meeting that the amounts of the quotations were very diverse, and Councillor Nash was very concerned that the three quotations were not based on comparable basis, despite meetings on site with each contractor involved and an explanation of the Parish Council's requirements by Councillor Nash.

The meeting discussed this at length and it was agreed that the amounts quoted could be of concern and that without a good specification for the project being produced, the Parish Council would be in a bad position to be able to accept any of the quotations currently before it.

The meeting suggested that Councillor Nash sought the assistance of the ESCC highways division, an Officer of which, may be in a position to advise the Parish Council in producing a suitable specification for the project, and that any costs involved for this advice may well save the Council in the long run.

The meeting asked the Clerk to contact ESCC Highways Department at Ringmer to seek the information required

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

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FIN.11.03.17 HERSTMONCEUX YEARLY ACTION SCHEDULE:

The Clerk circulated the latest version of the 'Yearly Action Schedule' for the information of the meeting.

The RFO reminded the meeting that this document would be a diary or 'Aide Memoir' to both Councillors and Officers to ensure that all the actions of the Parish Council during the year were, in fact scheduled and carried out, and also provided a document which the Clerk could smooth out the work of the Council across the year, avoiding, where possible, peaks and troughs in the Council's workload.

The RFO brought to the table the suggestion that this may lie within an area of the website where both Councillors and Officers could access amend, update, and refer it for up and coming workload requirements.

Councillor Mrs. Angear was against it being just available on the website, stating that she preferred to work with a paper copy. Councillor Nash was of the opinion that over time the Council would have to start budgeting for and issuing electronic iPads, tablets, or portable computers for use of Councillors as paper would give way to electronic records more and more.

The meeting generally agreed that currently the Clerk would be in charge of the maintenance of the Schedule, and urged both Councillors and Officers to acquaint the Clerk with any items they perceive as 'missing' from the Schedule, or would require being added, and inform the Clerk accordingly.

The Clerk stated that she had already picked-up on some items that required to be added to the Schedule, arising from discussions so far at the meeting.

FIN.12.03.17 STATIONERY PROCUREMENT:

Councillor Bradshaw was of the opinion that Staples UK Ltd, now rebranded as Office Outlet, was relatively costly for the purchase of Council stationery requirements. Councillor Bradshaw advocated that Viking Direct was cheaper, there was the ability to have an account for the Parish Council, orders were delivered free and normally next day. Councillor Bradshaw was also aware of the Parish Council's responsibility to Council Tax payers by obtaining the best terms for such items as stationery supplies. It was agreed that there were other stationery suppliers that could be found on the web and that may be advantageous to use for such items of stationery if they were even cheaper. Basically, it was stated that the Officers should obtain the best deals available, if possible.

In the meantime, it was **RECOMMENDED to FULL COUNCIL** that the Parish Council sets up an account with Viking Direct and that it is used as its main supplier, but that other suppliers be monitored for better deals on certain items that the Parish Council may require.

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

FIN.13.03.17 IDENTITY / ID BADGES:

The Clerk had kindly produced badges for each Member and Officer of the Parish Council to wear at the Annual Parish Meeting, to be held on 20 March next.

The original request for such badges had come from the Officers to alleviate problems encountered, such as the collection of mail from the local Post Office,

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as and when required. The RFO reported that this will be overcome by obtaining a 'certificate' from the Post Office with which the Parish Council will be able to authorise both Officers to collect such post.

FIN.14.03.17 DISASTER PLAN or BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN:

The RFO had investigated the basis for such plans on the internet and had circulated these electronically to each Member of the Committee. Councillor Bradshaw suggested that the RFO contact the Council's Insurance Provider who should be in a position to provide a layout for a Business Continuity Plan, which the Parish Council may be in a position to utilise, complete and adopt.

FIN.15.03.17 PHOTOCOPIER PROVISION:

The RFO, having contacted Mr Howard of Principal, and pushed him to review his initial offers to the Parish Council, had circulated electronically a subsequent report on the latest offer by Principal for a new machine which would show savings to the Parish Council.

The meeting asked the Clerk if she had any problems with the existing machine, to which the Clerk responded that she had not and everything appeared to be working well. Councillor Bradshaw reminded the meeting that the current agreement with Principal expires on 23 March next.

Asked what would happen if the Council took no action, the RFO was of the opinion that Principal would give notice to terminate the existing agreement, and that the Parish Council would be forced to review the matter and take some action.

The meeting discussed the matter further and **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that no action be taken at this time and that only when Principal give notice to terminate the current agreement, the matter needs to be reviewed. There may be a need for Councillor Stewart, as a Solicitor, to just recheck the current contract and advise.

The meeting thanked the RFO for his reports and comparable costings.

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

FIN.16.03.17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: The next meeting of the F&GP Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 02 May 2017, commencing at 7.30pm.

FIN.17.03.17 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 – Staff Appraisals.**
- 2. Parish Office – Window Blind.**
- 3. Parish Office – Health & Safety problem – step into corridor.**
- 4. Insurance Provision.**
- 5. Recreation Ground Car Park Access Road - update.**
- 6. Business Continuity Plan – devise and implement**

FIN.18.03.17 CLOSE OF MEETING: There being no other business, the Chairman, Councillor Bradshaw thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 21.35 pm