

## 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 02 May 2017** at the Meeting Room, Herstmonceux Village Information Centre, Gardner Street, Herstmonceux.

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

S. Goacher, RFO, took the Minutes,

Members of the Public: None.

**FIN.01.05.17 APOLOGIES:** Councillor I. Stewart (Annual Leave). Mrs C. Harrison (Clerk) also sent her apologies.

**FIN.02.05.17 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.03.05.17 DISPENSATION REQUESTS:** None received or required

**FIN.04.05.17 PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS:** None.

**FIN.05.05.17 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.

**Staff Appraisals:** The Sub-Committee would **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL**, via the F&GP Committee, that informal, regular, chats should take place with each Officer over the period of the year. The Council has a 'Duty of Care' to its Officers and, therefore, should encourage and provide the opportunity to its Officers to discuss issues workloads and other matters in connection with their employment on more occasions than at a once a year Appraisal. This would be in addition to the more formal Staff Appraisal Scheme already in place.

**Contracts:** Councillor Bradshaw to undertake with each Officer concerned a review of the Officer's Job Description. The Sub-Committee appreciates that the working regime of the Parish Council has changed over the past years and that due to continuing changes in workload, and diversity of Council services, Officer's Job Descriptions require updating and agreeing with the Officer. It is intended that the Personnel Sub-Committee will carry out an annual review of Job Descriptions thereafter. Following a review of the Job Descriptions, the Personnel Sub-Committee would **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL** that a formal review of the Officer's Contract of Employments be undertaken.

**Additional Hours:** The Clerk and RFO had submitted claims for Additional Hours, the Clerk for the three months ending 31 March 2017, and the RFO for

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the whole year 2016-17. Unfortunately, the documentation was not available for the Sub-Committee to discuss and it was asked that the Clerk supply each Member of the Sub-Committee with copies as soon as possible, so that the matter could be discussed at Full Council on 15 May 2017.

**Officer's Gratuity:** The RFO had written to the Chairman of the Parish Council requesting re-assurance from the Parish Council that the Gratuity clause, within his Contract of Employment, would be honoured in the light of the introduction of a recent pension scheme under Auto-Enrolment legislation. The F&GP meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the Gratuity Scheme for the RFO would continue and payment made on the Retirement of the RFO in accordance the Contract of Employment and prevailing legislation. Proposed: Councillor Mrs H. Kenward, Seconded: Councillor Nash; All Councillors in favour.

**FIN.06.05.17**

### **CURRENT YEAR EXPENDITURE:**

#### **1. Street Lighting Column Testing:**

The RFO, in discussions with Councillor Bradshaw, had arranged for one column required to be tested under the East Sussex County Highways maintenance program, in the sum of £84.00 inclusive of VAT. The column requiring testing has been identified as Column 2, Bagham Lane, Herstmonceux.

#### **2. The Bank opposite The Village Hall, adjacent to the A271, Hailsham Road, Herstmonceux:**

The RFO reported that Councillor Mrs Kenward is to meet with the Contractor, SLR Services, regarding the clearing of the bank adjacent to the A271, Hailsham Road, Herstmonceux, following consultation with residents within that area. The Contractor advised Councillor Mrs Kenward that the price of the quotation was valid for 30 days only and, therefore, the price quoted in January 2016, would have to be reviewed. The RFO brought to the attention of the meeting that SLR Services quotation did not indicate that the price is valid for 30 days only.

#### **3. Defibrillator Cabinet for Windmill Hill:**

The RFO informed the meeting that the Clerk had investigated obtaining a further cabinet to house the Windmill Hill defibrillator via Sussex Ambulance. The previous cabinets were provided free of charge, but that this option was no longer available. A further cabinet, normally £499 plus VAT, was being offered to the Parish Council at a reduced price of £425 plus VAT. The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the reduced offer be accepted. Proposed: Councillor Mrs Kenward; Seconded: Councillor Nash; All Members in Favour.

#### **4. Parish Noticeboards:**

The RFO reported that the Clerk had requested that the Parish Noticeboards be cleaned, as some of the notices could no longer be read through the glass/Perspex. The meeting discussed the matter and agreed that the Highways Working Group Members would carry out a general review of the condition of all the Parish Noticeboards, and note the state of the cleanliness of each, and a report back. The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that an annual clean of each Noticeboard should be professionally cleaned and that this should be incorporated within the fingerpost cleaning program/contract, currently with Extreme Clean.

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Further, the meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the wooden Parish Noticeboard at Cowbeech should be replaced with a similar noticeboard as located at Windmill Hill and as provided for within the 2017-18 estimates. Proposed: Councillor Nash, Seconded: Councillor Mrs Kenward; All Members in favour

### 5. **Direct Debit Authorities:**

Following the authorisation of Full Council (Minute: 17.04.56) the RFO asked the Signatories to sign the Direct Debit Forms in respect of the ICO (Information Commissioner's Office), and Laser Energy Buying Group, on behalf of the Parish Council

### **FIN.07.05.17 PARISH OFFICE:**

1. **Window Blinds:** The Clerk had requested consideration for the provision of suitable blinds for the bay window of the Parish Office. The meeting discussed the matter and authorises the Clerk to obtain quotes for suitable blinds from Blind Designs, Eastbourne, and Creative Curtains, Hailsham.
2. **Health & Safety Matter:** The RFO reported that Councillor Mrs Kenward had tripped up the step from the office up into the communal corridor within the Village Information Centre. Councillor Nash stated that the Rural Community Support Society had provided requisite warning notices 'Mind the Step' which were now displayed. There was a suggestion that yellow & black warning tape should also be installed, but because of carpet this would curl up and cause another hazard in itself. The meeting noted that appropriate action had been taken.

### **FIN.08.05.17 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS REVIEW:**

The RFO circulated a revised copy of the Parish Council's Financial Regulations. Councillor Bradshaw and the RFO had met and undertook the review, using the latest model issued by NALC in January 2016, comparing this with the previous Financial Regulations agreed in February 2015. The meeting thanked Councillor Bradshaw and the RFO for their work, and **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the Financial Regulations, as circulated, be adopted by the Parish Council. Proposed: Councillor Nash; Seconded: Councillor Mrs Kenward; All Members in favour.

### **FIN.09.05.17 INSURANCE PROVISION:**

The RFO brought to the attention of the meeting that the Parish Council had entered into a three-year contract with AON (Malvern Local Councils) to provide the Parish Council its insurance provision. The RFO stated that cover was appropriate for the Parish Council's needs and was in line with current cover. Councillor Bradshaw looked through the paperwork. The RFO stated that the premium payable had risen by 2.28% to £1,937.03 and was due as from 01 June 2017. The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that payment of the premium be made at the May Full Council meeting, in line with the three-year agreement in place.

### **FIN.10.05.17 BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN:**

The RFO had located an appropriate template from the internet that could be used to formulate the Parish Council's requirement for a Business Continuity Plan. The meeting agreed and **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that a small working party consisting of Councillors Bradshaw, Stewart, and the RFO should

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be formed to undertake the formulation of the Plan.

### **FIN.11.05.17 VILLAGE HALL / SURGERY ACCESS ROAD – UPDATE:**

In the absence of the Clerk, the meeting asked that the Clerk to report the up to date position regarding the Lease of the village hall / surgery access road to Full Council on 15 May 2017.

### **FIN.12.05.17 BANKING PROVISION:**

The RFO had circulated a further report in respect of Banking Provision, setting out the findings of the RFO in the provision of an online banking system that suited the authorisation requirements of the Parish Council. Unity Trust Bank specialising in Trade Unions and Local Councils offers an appropriate service. The RFO had been able to have two presentations of the Unity Trust Bank by a fellow Clerk to a Parish Council, which clearly showed that the RFO would be able to be authorised to move monies between a current account and a savings account. That payments set up to pay salaries and suppliers could be authorised, independently, by two of the Council's authorised signatories, reports on payments would show the identity of the person setting up the payment, and the identities of the authorising Members to produce a suitable audit trail for the Internal Auditor. Similarly, Direct Debits and Standing Orders could be set up online and appropriately authorised by the Member signatories. There would be bank charges incurred, amounting to £6 per month (£72 per annum) for organisations with a turnover of less than £100,000 per annum, which would be offset by a small amount of interest received via a Tailored Deposit Account, run alongside a current account.

Councillor Bradshaw was able to assure that the online security rating of Unity Trust was '4' and was considered very secure, whilst other banks, considered, had ratings of '3'.

The RFO informed the meeting that the Parish Council would retain a current account and a 'High Interest' Business Premium Account with Barclays Bank plc, its current bankers, and would then be able to reduce the risk of the Parish Council having more than £75,000 'exposed' with one financial institution. To this end the RFO asked Councillors Bradshaw, Kenward, and Stewart (in his absence) to sign a Barclays Bank Mandate Form and Personal Details forms.

The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the Parish Council:

1. Engages Unity Trust Bank as its Banking Provider and that a Current Account and Tailored Deposit Account be set up in the name of Herstmonceux Parish Council, AND
2. That a Current account and 'High Interest' Business Premium Account be retained with Barclays Bank plc, AND
3. That, over a period of time, all appropriate Direct Debits, Standing Orders, and general daily banking be transferred from Barclays Bank plc to Unity Trust Bank, AND
4. That a maximum of £75,000 be retained with Barclays Bank plc, most of which within the 'High Interest' Business Premium Account, AND
5. That Councillors Bradshaw, Kenward, Nash, Stewart, and the RFO be appointed as signatories to all accounts with the proviso that any two Member signatories may authorise payments, Direct Debits, and Standing Orders from the Council's accounts. The RFO be permitted to transfer

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monies between accounts within each banking institution, AND

6. That Councillors Mrs Angear and Goodsell be removed from the existing Mandate instruction to Barclays Bank plc

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

### **FIN.13.05.17 RECREATION GROUND CAR PARK ACCESS ROAD:**

Councillor Nash provided an update on the progress on the Parish Council preparing a suitable specification and obtaining quotations for the improvement of the access road into the car park at the recreation ground.

Councillor Nash had met with a representative from East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Highways, who had suggested that instead of having two passing bays along the access road that one longer passing bay would be better. The longer passing bay would save on the amount of infill requirement and would also avoid the possibility of subsidence.

Councillor Nash is awaiting a written response from ESCC, and once received will have a meeting with Mr Ford, the owner of the land, and confirm with him that the proposals are agreeable.

The meeting gave authorisation for Councillor Nash to agree a suitable specification for the longer passing bay, and to approach suitable contractors with an aim to achieve quotations for the F&GP Committee to consider and recommend.

Councillor Nash stated that two of the quotations already asked for and received would be possibly be too low and one way too high in the third case, as compared with quotations that would be based on a properly detailed specification, now being sought. Therefore, the Committee could not assess what a possible figure would be for this work, at this time.

### **FIN.14.05.17 RECREATIONAL FACILITIES:**

The RFO had placed this on the Agenda as the Parish Council were progressing towards receiving a strip of land at Lime Cross, and whether it was a time to engage with local sports clubs and other local organisations regarding a future strategy for the provision of sport and other facilities.

Councillor Nash stated that once the Neighbourhood Plan was approved, and had passed the referendum, and was in place, the Parish Council would need to consider and adopt a long-term strategy in terms of finance, etc., and he felt that this was a little too early, at the present time.

The meeting agreed that there was a need to put in place a long-term strategy and to engage with local sports clubs and other organisations and that this should be placed on the agenda of the September meeting of the F&GP Committee, when a more up to date position of the Neighbourhoods Plan would be known.

### **FIN.15.05.17 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN COSTS:**

The RFO had prepared a statement showing his perceived overspend on the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. This had been, somewhat, subsequently succeeded by a further quotation for another £1,927.50, plus VAT, quotation for additional time required to be undertaken by Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS) officers.

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Councillor Nash stated that the additional work required on the preparation of an SEA report and the additional work required by responses by Wealden District Council had absorbed more time than anticipated by AiRS in its original costings. Mainly in respect of the increased number of Policies required from 8 or 9 to 15 policies, in total.

Looking at the quotation for additional hours, received from AiRS, Councillor Bradshaw had concluded that hours were being quoted for items that were in the original contract, and not for any additional work carried out on behalf of, and required by the Parish Council.

Councillor Nash took the point that Councillor Bradshaw was making and the meeting instructed Councillor Nash to speak to the Clerk to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee to have AiRS amend the quotation accordingly.

The RFO and meeting noted that the expected overspend on the Neighbourhood Plan would likely to be around the sum of £3,000.

The review of the quotation, as received, was Proposed: Councillor Bradshaw; Seconded: Councillor Mrs Kenward, All Members in favour.

### **FIN.16.05.17 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.17.05.17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting of the F&GP Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 06 June 2017, commencing at 7.30pm.

### **FIN.18.05.17 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. Final Accounts 2016-2017.**
- 3. Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2017-18 financial year.**
- 4. Business Continuity Plan – Update.**

### **FIN.19.05.17 CLOSE OF MEETING:** There being no other business, the Chairman, Councillor Bradshaw thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 21.38 pm