

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 05 September 2017** at the Meeting Room, Herstmonceux Village Information Centre, Gardner Street, Herstmonceux.

Present: Councillors: Mrs J. Angear, M. Goodsell, Mrs H. Kenward, S. Nash, and I. Stewart. Mrs C. Harrison, Parish Clerk was also in attendance.

S. Goacher, RFO, took the Minutes,

Members of the Public: None.

Councillor I. Stewart took the Chair.

FIN.01.09.17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillor M. Bradshaw (Chairman) – Annual Leave

FIN.02.09.17 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTERESTS:

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

Councillor M. Goodsell – various small contracts for Herstmonceux Parish Council.

Councillor S. Nash – Herstmonceux Village Information Centre.

Councillor I. Stewart – Herstmonceux Village Hall

FIN.03.09.17 DISPENSATION REQUESTS: None.

FIN.04.09.17 PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS: None.

FIN.05.09.17 PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE:

Councillor Stewart reported to the meeting that the Staff Appraisal for the RFO had been undertaken and the appropriate Appraisal Forms completed. The Clerk had had an Appraisal meeting but there were no appraisal forms available or completed and that this situation would be rectified next year. The Sub-Committee were to be looking at the Job Descriptions of Officers, especially in the light of the completion and subsequent carrying out the policies and future reviews of the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan.

There had been some concerns whether the Chairman of the Council should be a Member of the Personnel Sub-Committee and such membership would be further considered after the implementation of a suitable Grievance Procedure. The Clerk and RFO had looked at many such procedures from other Town and Parish Councils within the immediate area and in other areas of the Country, and had provided these to the Personnel Sub-Committee members to consider and produce a suitable Procedure for further consideration and recommendation to Full Council.

It was noted by the meeting the disappointment of both Councillors and Officers at the lack of advice that could be provided by SALC on the matter of the membership of the Chairman of the Council on a Personnel Sub-Committee and on the provision of any format and basic requirements for a Grievance Procedure.

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The Neighbourhood Plan timetable was considered by the meeting in relation to the continued employment of the Clerk to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee (CNPSC). It was agreed that the natural end of the contract for the CNPSC had been reached as the Plan had been submitted to Wealden District Council, but that the Parish Council must give CNPSC a period of notice, under her existing contract of employment. An initial discussion with the postholder as to continuing on an Ad Hoc basis after the Neighbourhood Plan had gone through Wealden District Council, Independent Examination and Public Referendum, had taken place. The meeting felt that the Personnel Sub-Committee should have proper discussions with the postholder and invite her to a meeting with the Personnel Sub-Committee to discuss and obtain her acceptance to be being engaged on an 'As and When' arrangement that should not last for more than 12 weeks.

It was Proposed and **RECOMMENDED to FULL COUNCIL** that the Clerk to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee be given one month's Notice on 25th September 2017, and that the postholder invited to a meeting with members of the Personnel Sub-Committee to discuss a further working arrangement lasting no more than 12 weeks, once the Notice period has been exhausted.

Proposed; Councillor Stewart; Seconded; Councillor Mrs Kenward; All Members in favour.

FIN.06.09.17 **CURRENT YEAR EXPENDITURE:**

1. **Concrete Litter Bin, West End to Stunts Green:** The RFO reported that, under emergency arrangements, Mr J. O'Brien trading as 'Just Call the Handyman' had been engaged to re-secure the litter bin in the ground, where it has been ripped out by vandals. The appropriate Works Order had been issued in the sum of £135.
2. **Blinds for the Parish Office:** The Clerk had engaged a survey by Blind Design of Eastbourne for the fitting of blinds on the inside of the door, bay window, and little window of the Parish Office. Blind Design had recommended pleated blinds contained within a framework for all windows and door. This would permit the door to open fully and not restrict the opening for such visitors to the Parish Office such as disabled persons in wheelchairs, etc. The total quotation amounted to £236.66 plus VAT. The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** to accept the quotation and the RFO will issue the appropriate Works Order.

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

3. **Membership of Action in Rural Sussex:** The RFO advised the meeting that Action in Rural Sussex had contacted the Parish Council to say that Herstmonceux Parish Council was not a member of Action in Rural Sussex. Councillor Stewart made the observation that the Parish Council was a member some years ago, especially around the time the Herstmonceux Village Hall was being discussed and constructed. The RFO confirmed that the Parish Council had not been a member since he joined the Council in 2000. The current membership fee being £50 per annum. The meeting discussed the matter and it was proposed:

That it be **RECOMMENDED to FULL COUNCIL** that the Parish Council

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renew its membership to Action Rural Sussex.

Proposed: Councillor Stewart; Seconded: Councillor Mrs Kenward; All members in Favour.

4. **Highways Assets Review – Highways Working Group:** The RFO brought to the attention of the meeting a report prepared by the Highways Working Group, which will be going before the next Amenities Committee at its meeting on 25 September 2017, on the condition of certain assets adjacent to the highways within the parish. Items such as re-roofing of the various bus shelters, works to parish noticeboards and general cleaning of seats and benches, will have cost implications which will need to be built in the forthcoming Annual Estimates, and it may be considered that the adoption of general handyman services to carry out many of the more routine, minor maintenance.
5. **Allotments Lease:** The Clerk reported that the Parish Council's Solicitors had sent out the final copies of the new lease to be signed by all parties.
6. **Transfer of Land, Lime Cross:** Mr Andrew Pluck of Hart Reade, Solicitors had written regarding the Transfer of Land at Lime Cross:

“Since I submitted to you the letter of 22nd May 2017 the developer's solicitors have come back with further amendments to the TP1 basically removing the rights of access to repair and maintain the fencing. I have asked them to clarify exactly why they have removed that because clearly if the obligation to fence on the Council is part of a Section 106 obligation or requirements, you will need to have access to both sides to repair and maintain the fencing as is normal practice. Unless there is some pressing reason why this cannot be achieved I do not see why we should agree that. I will contact you as soon as I have heard further from them.

The meeting awaits further comments and advice from Mr Pluck
7. **Parish Council Office OPEN sign:** The Clerk circulated the layout for a metal sign advertising the opening day and times for the Parish Office. The meeting approved the layout, and thanked the Clerk.
8. **Registration with the Land Registry:** The RFO informed the meeting that the Clerk had completed the majority of the online forms for the registration of the Parish Council with the Land Registry, with the exception of details of the Council's bank details. The RFO awaited information of the opening of the new account with Unity Trust Bank, and would complete the appropriate forms on behalf of the Clerk.

FIN.07.09.17 ANNUAL ESTIMATES – ESTIMATE WORKING SHEETS 2018-19:

The RFO had prepared the Estimate Working Sheets for the forthcoming Annual Estimate procedure. The Estimate Working Sheets are for the cost provision of Special Expenditure, and Special Projects put forward for consideration for the inclusion in the estimates from Committees, Working Groups and from individual Members.

The Working Sheets included a comparison between Actual v. Estimated Expenditure as at 31 August 2017, copy of the appropriate estimate agreed in December 2016, a copy of any Reserve Account, and Special Projects.

The Working Sheets should be completed and returned to the RFO by 30th

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September 2017.

Councillor Stewart supported the procedure put into place by Councillor Bradshaw and the RFO and stated that to get things right, especially with the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan policies over future years, it was imperative that these forms are completed accurately and on time.

FIN.08.09.17 FORMER PUBLIC CONVENIENCES, HERSTMONCEUX:

The Clerk reminded the meeting that the Parish Council had agreed to give Wealden District Council its decision as to whether it was interested in purchasing and developing the former Public Conveniences building and site by 06 September 2017.

The Clerk circulated copies of the Council's appointed Surveyors, Lawson Queay, proposals and approx. costings for the development of the building/site.

The Clerk had prepared a formal report for submission to Wealden District Council for consideration by WDC Asset Management Group meeting on 07 September 2017, incorporating details of the surveyor's proposals.

The meeting discussed the surveyor's proposals, and the report document prepared by the Clerk. A couple of amendments to the Clerk's report were agreed by the meeting, and it was proposed that the Clerk is authorised to submit the amended report to Wealden District Council for consideration by the Asset Management Group.

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

It was further proposed to **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL** that the Parish Council write to Wealden District Council to proceed with the acquisition of the building of the former public conveniences and its future development.

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

FIN.09.09.17 APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR:

The RFO reminded the meeting that Mr. Keith Robertson, of Catsfield, had applied to undertake the duties of the Parish Council's Internal Audit from 2017-18 onwards on a yearly review. The RFO had obtained references in respect of Mr. Robertson's suitability as an Internal Auditor from Alfriston Parish Council, Catsfield Parish Council, and Chiddingly Parish Council. All references stated that the Parish Councils were very pleased with Mr. Robertson and that audits were conducted in accordance with the Governance and Accountability for Local Councils Practitioners' Guide (GALCP) and met the requirements of each of the Parish Councils.

The meeting discussed the matter and it was proposed to **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL** that the appointment of Mr. Keith Robertson as the Parish Council's Internal Auditor be approved, that this appointment is reviewed and confirmed on an annual basis, and that Mr. Robertson be asked to undertake an Interim Audit as well as the Final Audit in respect of each year.

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

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FIN.10.09.17 KEY MAN INSURANCE:

The RFO reminded the meeting that one of the recommendations of the Internal Audit report for 2016-2017 financial year was that the Parish Council should consider 'Key Person / Key Man' Insurance. The RFO had obtained a quotation through Endsleigh Financial Services Ltd, and some advice regarding Key Man Insurance. This quotation was circulated to members of the F&GP Committee on receipt.

The RFO was under the impression that such insurance provided cover for costs of having to employ a Locum when either of the Officers are on long term sickness or resulting from an accident.

Key Man Insurance is where an employer takes out life insurance for key employees which covers the life of those employees for certain critical illnesses, or death. It does not cover periods caused through any form of accident. The employer would receive a lump sum, if the employee is on long term absence due to an agreed critical illness or in the event of death.

Councillor Bradshaw had made his comments known to members of the F&GP Committee, ending his comments with "My recommendation is for the F&GP Committee to reject the idea of even considering it."

The meeting discussed the matter at length and the meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that no further action is taken.

Proposed; Councillor Nash; Seconded; Councillor Mrs Kenward; All Members in favour.

FIN.11.09.17 VILLAGE HALL ACCESS ROAD:

The Clerk and the Council's legal advisors are still awaiting any outcome from Dr. Simmons and his Solicitors regarding the easement.

Councillor Stewart, reiterating his Declaration as Treasurer of the Village Hall, stated that the Village Hall had completed its side of the transfer of the roadway back to the Parish Council and that this documentation can now be registered officially with the Land Registry.

The Clerk would check this with the Parish Council's legal advisors and get the documentation registered with the Land Registry accordingly. The Clerk would ask that Dr. Simmons and his Solicitors are chased regarding the easement.

FIN.12.09.17 RECREATION GROUND ACCESS ROAD:

Councillor Nash stated that Mr. Ford, landowner, required the Parish Council to confirm that the widening of the access road did not require Planning Permission. The Parish Council is in contact with the Planning department of Wealden District Council regarding this and there has been no indication that Planning Permission is required.

The backfilling of the site to enable the widening of the access road may need some formal permission in relation to the movement of lorries bringing in soil and other materials for the foundations. This is a matter for Mr. Ford to sort out, not for the Parish Council.

Councillor Nash will be reporting on the proposed costs of the hardcore, road plainings to be used for the building of the additional road surfacing, to a future

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meeting of the R&F committee.

FIN.13.09.17 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN:

The RFO had distributed to all Members of the Finance & General Purposes Committee a statement of the costs of the Neighbourhood Plan to 31 August 2017, amounting to £29,632.58 (net). The RFO informed the meeting that he had to still allocate some photocopying costs to the project.

The meeting undertook long discussion on the Parish Council discussing the future Administration and Implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan. The meeting felt that the Parish Council itself would be the 'Implementation' body for the Neighbourhood Plan and to some extent the sequencing of the implementation of projects and policies contained within the Plan will become self-evident over the next few years.

The Plans timetable was again referred to and it was proposed to **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL** that an Extraordinary meeting of Full Council should be convened towards the end of October 2017, with just one agenda item.

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

FIN.14.09.17 HIGHWAYS VERGE-CUTTING CONTRACT 2017-2018:

The RFO had contacted East Sussex County Council regarding any changes in the requirements for the verge-cutting contract for 2017-2018, but had yet not received any reply.

The RFO sought permission to go ahead to advertise the Verge-Cutting Contract for 2017-2018, once a reply from ESCC had been received. The meeting agreed.

Proposed: Councillor Stewart; Seconded; Councillor Nash; All members in favour

FIN.15.09.17 BANKING PROVISION:

The RFO reported that he had obtained confirmation that Unity Trust Bank had accepted and had opened a Current Account and a Tailored Deposit Account in the name of the Parish Council, earlier that day. The accounts would be up and running by the end of September / early October 2017.

FIN.16.09.17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting of the F&GP Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 03 October 2017, commencing at 7.30pm.

FIN.17.09.17 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING: The RFO records that the following items will appear on the agenda for the next meeting:

1. ESTIMATE WORKING SHEETS:

To receive and discuss special expenditure and special projects put forward by Committees, Working Groups and individual Councillors for consideration in including in the Annual Estimates.

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2. CONTRACT SPECIFICATION REVIEW:

To discuss and schedule the Amenities Committee, and Work Groups to undertake a review of the Council's Grounds Maintenance / Small Contracts in readiness for going out to tender in October 2018 for the period 2019/20 to 2021/2022 (three year).

FIN.18.09.17 CLOSE OF MEETING:

There being no other business, the Chairman, Councillor Stewart thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 21.10 pm