

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

Present: Councillors: Mrs J. Angear, M. Bradshaw (Chairman), M. Goodsell, Mrs H. Kenward, and S. Nash. Mrs C. Harrison, Parish Clerk was also in attendance.

S. Goacher, RFO, took the Minutes,

Members of the Public: None.

#### **FIN.01.11.17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Councillor I. Stewart

#### **FIN.02.11.17 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.

#### **FIN.03.11.17 DISPENSATION REQUESTS:** None.

#### **FIN.04.11.17 PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS:** None.

#### **FIN.05.11.17 PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE:**

No Report.

#### **FIN.06.11.17 CURRENT YEAR EXPENDITURE:**

1. **Verge-cutting Contract Contribution:** The RFO informed the meeting that he had received an email from ESCC regarding the contribution to the Parish Council towards the verge-cutting within Herstmonceux parish.

“For the financial year 2018/19 we can confirm that your Parish will receive the same contribution as in 2017/18 to undertake grass cutting activities in your Parish area. If you no longer wish to undertake grass cutting activities, please inform us as soon as possible.

As mentioned below recommendations and decisions were made at the Cabinet meeting of 24 January 2017 on savings that the County Council needed to make. The report detailed the option of reducing the budget for grass cutting from the start of the 2017/18 financial year. However, Cabinet agreed to defer these savings to allow further work and consultation to take place with local communities and for the results to be presented back to Cabinet to consider prior to any final decision being taken.

Therefore, it is likely that from the 2019/2020 financial grass cutting season, the County Council’s contribution to Herstmonceux Parish Council will be reviewed and could potentially decrease. As such we would recommend that the Parish only set their budget for grass cutting for the next financial year, and if necessary do not enter into agreements with contractors for longer than the next year.”

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Councillor Mrs Kenward mentioned that at a recent SLR meeting County Councillor Bentley had mentioned that the cutting of the rural verges was possibly to be reduced from two to one cut per annum. The RFO reminded the meeting that rural verge-cutting, such as along Lower Road, was outside of the jurisdiction of the Parish Council to be able to be considered for additional cuts. The meeting agreed that the Parish Council would have to monitor the situation and if need be, contact local landowners regarding hedge-cutting etc.

2. **Fencing at Lime Cross Sports Ground:** The RFO referred to recent discussions he had had with Councillor Nash regarding the length of the fencing required at the Lime Cross Sports Ground, on transfer of the additional land to the Parish Council. The RFO had enquired whether quotations were actively being sought for the materials and installation of the fence. Councillor Nash had broached the matter with Councillor Goodsell as well as got ideas of cost via the internet and this worked out at approx. £10 per metre, totalling about £1500. The RFO asked the Clerk if the transfer of land was imminent, and The Clerk replied that she had not heard from the Solicitor, so could not provide any indication of any progress on the matter.
3. **Finger Posts – Cowbeech Hill, and Cricketing Lane/Lower Road:** Councillor Mrs Kenward asked the meeting for permission to proceed with repairs to two finger posts, one at Cowbeech Hill (£75), and one at the junction of Cricketing Lane/Lower Road (£500) that was in a particularly bad state of repair. The matter was discussed further and it was agreed to **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL** that the necessary Works Orders should be issued the Jakk Country Furniture Designs for the repairs to the two finger posts in the total sum of £575.

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

4. **Bus Shelters – Initial Clean:** Councillor Mrs Kenward brought to the meeting a quotation for the cleaning and de-vegetation of the four brick built bus shelters within the parish. The quotations from ‘Just Call the Handyman’ of Herstmonceux were as follows:

**Windmill Hill, opposite the Post Office:** Sweep out and clear leaves, remove cob webs from roof, remove any rubbish. **£65.00**

**Windmill Hill, opposite Victoria Road:** Sweep out and clear leaves, remove cobwebs from roof, remove any rubbish. **£65.00**

**Hailsham Road, opposite Village Green:** Sweep out and clear leaves, remove cobwebs from roof, remove any rubbish. **£65.00**

**Hailsham Road, adjacent to North Lodge:** Sweep out and clear leaves, remove cobwebs from roof, remove ivy from interior and exterior roof, remove any rubbish. **£95.00**

The meeting discussed the quotations, as presented, and considered these to be slightly expensive. Councillor Mrs Kenward said that this work needed to be carried out as soon as possible, so that the badly needed renovation of these bus shelters could take place over the next two years. Councillor Mrs Kenward did not consider the quotations expensive as the bus shelters had not been maintained for some time and the growth of ivy, for example, was excessive in some instances. Councillor Mrs Angear said that the work

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should not be carried out until February or March, next year, as if the work was carried out at present the shelters would receive more leaves in them until the trees had shed all their leaves, and proposed this. Councillor Mrs Kenward, disagreed, and placed an amendment that the work should be carried out in December. Councillor Goodsell observed that trees would not necessarily be totally de-foliaged until the end of the year, and proposed January. After more discussion, and Councillor Mrs Kenward having withdrawn her amendment to the original proposal, the meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the quotations, totalling £290, are accepted and that the cleaning works are to be carried out in January 2018. Proposed; Councillor Goodsell: Seconded Councillor Nash; Majority in favour, Councillor Mrs Angear voted against.

**Expenses Claims:** The RFO brought to the meeting to seek approval of a claim for the reimbursement of a parking fine, levied by Wealden District Council, whilst a Councillor was attending a meeting and representing the Parish Council. The RFO was concerned that this may set a precedent for both Councillors and for Officers, in future. Councillor Bradshaw commented that the individual was normally responsible for his/her vehicle whilst being used in connection with his/her duties and that the employer was not liable for any penalties incurred with the use of that vehicle. Councillor Nash concurred, stating that when in business he made sure that his business would not reimburse any parking fines incurred by his staff, ensuring that if their vehicle needed to be moved, they would do so. Councillor Nash agreed with the RFO that an agreement to reimburse this fine would open the door to possible claims from the Clerk, RFO, and other Councillors for not only parking fines but speeding fines etc. The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the Parish Council, in carrying out its 'duty of care' in respect of Council Taxpayers money, will not be responsible for any penalties incurred by Councillors or staff in the course of their duties, and that the Clerk amends all appropriate Policies and employment agreements to reflect this, as necessary. The Expense claim is, therefore, not accepted.

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

5. **Defibrillator – Windmill Hill:** The Clerk reported that MAS Systems had reconsidered the electrical connection of the Telephone Box at Windmill Hill, by reference to a similar installation within the parish of Chiddingly. MAS Systems had given a ball-part figure of £500 for carrying out an electrical connection to the Box, in which the Defibrillator was to be housed. The Clerk sought permission to obtain quotations for the refurbishment of the Telephone Box and to obtain a proper quotation from MAS Systems. The meeting provided the Clerk with the necessary authorisation, stating it was absurd to have a defibrillator and cabinet lying around in the Parish Office.
6. **Contractors List:** The RFO had received information from Tim Jordan, Ground Maintenance Ltd, who offers services to include grass moving, compact tractor, out front and cylinder mowing, strimming, hedge-cutting, and shrub clearance. The RFO stated that he would invite the contractor to tender for the verge-cutting contract, should he have all the necessary qualifications.

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### FIN.07.11.17 ANNUAL ESTIMATES:

1. **AMENITIES – GROUNDS WORKING GROUP:** The RFO had received the Estimate Worksheets from Councillor Nash in respect of the Grounds Working Group. Councillor Nash went through his Estimate Working Sheets with the meeting.

The meeting agreed that the following provisions should be included in the Annual Estimates:

#### Grounds:

Item	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
<b>RECREATION GROUND ACCESS ROAD:</b> To widen the access road with the co-operation of the landowner, Mr John Ford, providing hardcore and road planning surface to allow for the settling of landfill. Planning & Environment fees, approx. £500 to be met from existing (2017-18) budget. Legal Fees for this project may also have to be considered – previously listed as a separate item now included in overall estimate.	10,000	10,000	10,000
<b>RECREATION GROUND CAR PARK:</b> To upgrade the existing car park to comply with the Neighbourhood Plan Objective Policy 6.1.e. minimum 25 cars, improved hardstanding, and lighting, if applicable	10,000	10,000	10,000
<b>TARMAC PATH to BOWLS PAVILION:</b> To provide a tarmac or similar hard surface path from the recreation ground car park with low level lighting as per Neighbourhood Plan Policy.	5,000	5,000	5,000
<b>ENHANCED PLAY FACILITIES:</b> To providing enhance play facilities as and when applicable i.e. resurfacing of Skatepark ramps, improvements to under twelve play area, and provision of mid age play facilities. NB: Due to the considerable costs of providing good quality play equipment this fund should be accumulative.	5,000	5,000	5,000

The meeting would **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL** all the provisions requested by the Grounds Working Group via the Amenities Committee as detailed above, to be included in the Annual Estimates.

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

2. **HERSTMONCEUX PUBLIC CONVENIENCES:** Councillor Bradshaw took the meeting through the proposed costings of the Public Conveniences, which the RFO had now included in the Annual Estimates Version 1 Working papers. The overall net costs to the Parish Council estimated at £14,700 in a full year was not far from actual costings provided by Hailsham Town Council of £12,550 per annum, in respect of its Public Conveniences. Councillor Bradshaw stated that he had met with a local builder to ascertain

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what was needed in respect of initial refurbishment and he was advised to have the building thoroughly cleaned, so that the fabric of the building could be inspected thoroughly, and an estimate could be given. A thorough clean would cost £245 and it was agreed to **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL** that the amount of £245 be approved at the Extraordinary Full Council meeting (20 November 2017) for initial cleaning.

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

Wealden District Council had also offered a License on the property of the Public Conveniences and the meeting discussed the acceptance of the License for a period of one or two years, to provide an initial period before the Parish Council had to decide on entering into a Lease of the building or purchasing the building from Wealden District Council. The License would be at a peppercorn rental of £10 per annum.

3. **ANNUAL ESTIMATES Version 1:** The RFO had prepared the Annual Estimates for (Revised) 2017-18; (Original) 2018-19, Version 1, and circulated this to all F&GP Members. The RFO stated that he had included all the provisions brought forward by Committees, Work Groups, and Individual Members, that had been agreed, and included these in the first draft of the estimates. The RFO directed the meeting to the required level of Precept needed to cover all these provisions and indicated that initially this would be at an unacceptable level.

The RFO referred to the latest SLCC's publication of 'The Clerk' and in particular to an article written by Crispin Taylor, the National Finance Officer in respect of the Preparation of the annual budget:

"It is important that members are involved at an early stage in the preparation of the budget. Naturally members will expect the RFO to advise on normal annual running costs such as staff costs, insurance and business rates, but it is members who need to consider what services the council intends to deliver, and in particular, whether the council intends to undertake any new projects. It is too late for members to come up with ideas for new projects once the budget has been approved and the precept set. It is often helpful to have informal (private) meetings of members to ensure that they are fully briefed and have the opportunity to share ideas"

Councillor Bradshaw asked of the RFO whether it was illegal to take money from the Reserve Funds, the RFO replied that to reduce the Parish Council's Reserves would not be illegal and, in fact, would be encouraged in the current financial climate rather than great increases to the level of Precept. The meeting discussed the estimates and it was proposed:

To make the following amendments to the first version of the Annual Estimates:

1. To Reduce the un-ringfenced portion of the General Reserve to £5,000 by transfer back into general account the sum of £25,000.
2. To transfer the whole of the un-ringfenced amount of £10,000 from the Street Lighting Reserve Account back to General Account.
3. To transfer the whole of the un-ringfenced amount of £10,000 from the Old Surgery Reserve Account back to General Account.
4. To remove from the Estimates of £2,500 (2019-20) and £3,000 (2020-

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21) in respect of the move of the Parish Office provisions.

The overall effect of these measures should reduce the requirement of the increase in the Precept level for 2018-19 from 66.06% increase to 1.05% increase.

Proposed: Councillor Nash; Seconded: Councillor Mrs Angear; All members in favour.

Members were asked to have a good look through the Annual Estimates to ascertain whether there should be any further amendments to the provisions made, and report to the next meeting of the F&GP Committee or inform the RFO by no later than 01 December next.

### **FIN.08.11.17 BUSINESS PLAN:**

The RFO had attended a Budget Preparation and Precept Setting Workshop recently, and it was advised that Parish Councils should have a Business Plan for a period of years, preferably a 5-year plan, in which the intended projects and their financing would be set out. Withyham Parish Council, had been highlighted as a local council that had undertaken this, and the RFO brought to the meeting and had circulated electronically a copy of the core Business Plan document, a pamphlet that had been circulated to all households in the parish of Withyham, and a questionnaire form used to obtain the views of parishioners. The RFO suggested that the idea of a business plan document that sat alongside the Neighbourhood Plan document may be worth consideration and would focus the Parish Council on prioritising its intended projects and assisting in the estimates preparation in future. The Clerk agreed, saying that the Neighbourhood Plan document encompassed a wider view of the requirements of parishioners and intentions of the services that the Parish Council may wish to provide. A business plan would aid the provision of those policies and requirements and back up the estimate process. The matter was left to the Councillors to consider and discuss at a future time.

### **FIN.09.11.17 STREET LIGHTING:**

Councillor Bradshaw had prepared and circulated a report on street lighting proposals, seeking authority to spend £3,300 on two new lights in Hailsham Road, together with 7 or 8 units of low level footpath lamps alongside the footway. The report indicated that these two lights would cost approx. £850, but Councillor Bradshaw had received an updated indication from ESCC that each lamp would cost £1,800. The meeting discussed the report and Councillor Nash suggested that the whole of the requirements of Street Lighting needed to be discussed by the Amenities Committee in detail, before any request for funding be considered by the Finance & General Purposes Committee. The meeting agreed, and further discussion was suspended

### **FIN.10.11.17 INVICTA LAW – Fixed Priced Legal Scheme:**

The Clerk had passed to the RFO a letter from Invicta Law, who were now providing a fixed price legal service to Town & Parish Councils. The RFO suggested that the letter be referred to Councillor Stewart, for his opinion on such a scheme and for Councillor Stewart to advise the Parish Council accordingly. The letter was passed back to the Clerk to liaise with Councillor Stewart.

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### **FIN.11.11.17 GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR):**

The Clerk reported that she had been on a Networking Event part of which was appertaining to the new Data Protection Regulations, and that the presenter on the subject was excellent. The tutor is to be taking a course on the Regulations for Hellingly Parish Council, which is to be held in February 2018, and the Clerk felt that it was important that Members of the Finance & General Purposes Committee should have the opportunity to attend. The meeting agreed, and it was **RECOMMENDED to FULL COUNCIL** that all members of the Finance & General Purposes Committee attend the Data Protection course and that Herstmonceux Parish Council's proportion of the course fees be met from the Training Budget.

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

There is a requirement under the Regulations that every Regulatory Body should designate one officer as its Data Protection Officer, this means that every Town & Parish Council's Clerk would normally be the designated Data Protection Officer. There are thoughts that this may be changed so that the District Council will have its designated Data Protection Officer being responsible for all the local councils within the district.

### **FIN.12.11.17 BANK PROVISION:**

Barclays Bank had informed the Parish Council of changes to banking procedures and to terms of business. The RFO stated that on reading the changes to Open Banking, and its associated terms of business, this did not have any impact on the Parish Council.

Unity Trust Bank had informed the Parish Council that its 'Tailored deposit Account' was to be renamed 'Instant Access Account' as from 04 December 2017. All other conditions to remain the same.

### **FIN.13.11.17 HERSTMONCEUX GRANTS SCHEME:**

Councillor Bradshaw said that the Herstmonceux Grants Scheme review would be deferred to the December F&GP meeting, because of lack of time.

### **FIN.14.11.17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

The next meeting of the F&GP Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 05 December 2017, commencing at 7.30pm.

### **FIN.15.11.17 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING:** The RFO records that the following items will appear on the agenda for the next meeting:

#### **ANNUAL ESTIMATES - 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft:**

1. To receive copies of the Revised Estimates 2016/17, and Original Estimates 2017/18, together with provisions for the two further years 2018/19, and 2019/20.

#### **HERSTMONCEUX GRANTS SCHEME:**

1. To discuss the existing Grants Scheme and carry out a review as necessary.

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### **REMEMBERANCE POPPIES:**

1. To consider the use of Poppies of a size designated for use and displayed on a 'Lorry' for attaching to Lighting Columns, Telephone Poles, to commemorate Remembrance Day in future years

### **FIN.16.11.17 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