

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 December 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, 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.

FIN.01.12.17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

None.

FIN.02.12.17 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.03.12.17 DISPENSATION REQUESTS: None.

FIN.04.12.17 PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS: None.

FIN.05.12.17 PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE:

No Report, but Councillor Stewart, as Chairman of the Parish Council, reported to the Committee that the Finance Officer had given Notice to Retire on 31 March 2018.

FIN.06.12.17 CURRENT YEAR EXPENDITURE:

- 1. Defibrillator Training by Eastbourne First Responders:** Councillor Bradshaw had requested the RFO to include in the business a request to make a donation to the Eastbourne First Responders for undertaking Defibrillator training at which 11 persons attended. The meeting discussed the matter. The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that a donation £100 be made to Eastbourne First Responders. Proposed: Councillor Mrs J. Angear; Seconded: Councillor Bradshaw; All Members in favour.
- 2. Christmas Decorations & Lights:** The Amenities Committee had requested Councillor Stewart to purchase new Christmas Tree lights, and Councillor Stewart had referred the matter to the RFO to seek authorisation for payment. Councillor Stewart took no part in the following discussion. The RFO felt that the F&GP Committee could provide the appropriate authorisation rather than the matter being referred up to Full Council. Authorisation for the reimbursement of £51.87 for the lights purchased was given to the RFO to reimburse Councillor Stewart. Proposed: Councillor Mrs Angear; Seconded: Councillor Nash; All other Members in favour.

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3. **Finger Posts:** The RFO confirmed that appropriate Works Orders had now been issued for the required repairs to the Finger Posts at Cowbeech Hill junction and Lower Road junction with Cricketing Lane.
4. **Refurbishment of the telephone Box at Windmill Hill:** The RFO had been supplied with one quotation for the refurbishment of the telephone box at Windmill Hill, and sought information as to whether any further quotes were expected. The Clerk stated that another Contractor had visited the site of the box and was to provide a quote to the Parish Council. The matter is to be included on the Agenda for the December Full Council.
5. **CPRE:** The Campaign to Protect Rural England had written to seek funding towards its “fight against the onslaught of inappropriate development across Sussex”. The RFO referred the meeting to Minute FCL 17.01.07.1 (16 January 2017) when a similar request for funding was received from CPR had been considered via F&GP Committee and referred to Full Council, where it was decided that NO DONATION was to be made. The meeting discussed the matter and agreed that this was a ‘Fighting Fund’ donation and the Council had made its decisions in such cases. No further action to be taken.
6. **Barclaycard:** The RFO sought the signatures of two of the bank signatories to set up a new Direct Debit Mandate to Barclaycard on the change of bank accounts to Unity Trust. Also, a Change of Account Administrators for Barclaycard removing Mr W. Gower, and replacing him with Councillor Stewart. The appropriate forms were signed on behalf of the Parish Council.

FIN.07.12.17 ANNUAL ESTIMATES:

1. **The 2nd Draft of the Annual Estimates** had been circulated to all Members of the Committee electronically or in hardcopy, reflecting the additions and other provision amendments discussed at the November meeting.
2. **Amendments to 2nd Draft Estimates:** Councillor Bradshaw, Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, and the RFO had met on 04 December to review all the provisions contained in the 2nd version of the Estimates, as circulated. Arising from that meeting, Councillor Bradshaw and the RFO brought to the meeting a list of suggested amendments for discussion. The RFO circulated the following report:

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Suggested Amendments to Annual Estimates v.2 (December 2017)						
Meeting between: Councillor Bradshaw and RFO (04 December 2017)						
Page No	Item	Ledger Code	Revised 2017-18	Original 2018-19	Estimate 2019-20	Estimate 2020-21
1	RFO Salary - Payment of Gratuity of approx. £3970	AE100102		3970		
1	Locum RFO	AE100104		400		
1	Officer Recruitment Costs	AE100112	700			
1	Pension (Employers) Overheads to £4980	AE100113		1660	1800	1830
2	Data Protection to £100	AG100216		60	60	60
2	Defibrillator Training (Councillors, Staff, and Parishioners)	AG100282		200	200	200
3	Office Photocopying Charges	AG100316	-700	150		
3	Office - Computer Equipment (for new RFO) to £750	AG100318		250		
3	Office - IT Software (Money Manager Business Edition) £95	AG100321		100		
4	Grants - Overall Provision (2018-19)			1500		
5	Parish - Defibrillator Training (moved to Page 2	AG100725		-250	-250	-250
5	Stunts Green Telephone Box - move to V.Hall site - £850			-550		
6	(New) World War 1 - Commemoration Day			500		
16	(New) Christmas Decorations		250	300	300	300
16	Verge Grass-cutting - HPC/HIGHWAYS/Contract to £6000	HW100212		1000		
24	Close Officers Gratuity Reserve Fund	U104100			-220	-220
24	Close Officers Gratuity Reserve Fund			-3970		
Total Additions / Deletions:			250	5320	1890	1920

Prepared by
Simon P. Goacher
05 December 2017

The RFO went through each item and provided the reasons for the suggested amendments.

In respect of computer and computer software the RFO stated that he had been using his own computer equipment and software to run the accounts side of the Parish Council. Councillor Nash suggested that the provision of a new computer with such software as Office 365, may require an increase from the suggested £25 to £500. Councillor Bradshaw advised the meeting that accountancy software can be 'Cloud' based and had the advantage of being able to be accessed by not only the RFO, but the Clerk and Councillors from various devices.

Councillor Mrs Angear questioned the provision in future years of the Christmas decoration provision mentioning that in past years the village had larger Christmas Trees. The matter was discussed further and the provisions from 2018-19 onwards were increased to £500 per year.

3. **Council Tax Support Grant:** The RFO had received notification from Wealden District Council of the amount Herstmonceux was to receive in Council Tax Support Grant for 2018-19 (£1,656) and in 2019-20 (£663). The RFO continued by stating that after 2019-20, there would be no further receipts in respect of Council Tax Support Grant.
4. **Council Tax Base 2018-19:** The RFO had received the PROVISIONAL council Tax Base for 2018-19 from Wealden District Council which had increased from the current £1,039.50 to £1,059.00. The RFO stated that this figure may change again before the Parish Council sets its Precept, but normally the Provisional Base does not alter.

The RFO had used the suggested amendments, prior any alterations from the meeting, the Council Tax Support Grant receipt and Council Tax Base as notified and projected this to ascertain the required Precept which now had risen to £75,430, an increase of 8.96% in the Precept, resulting in an increase in a Council Tax Band 'D' of 6.95% or £4.63 per annum.

Councillor Bradshaw urged Members to have a good look at all the provisions in the Annual Estimates and try and find further savings.

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Councillor Nash enquired of the RFO if the Annual Estimates provided a suggested £120,000+ for the access road widening, the car par upgrade and tarmac path with low level lighting. The RFO stated that the General Reserve Fund had provided a total of £37,500 ring-fenced in 2017-18, £36,000 ring-fenced in 2018-19, £36,000 ring-fenced in 2019-20, and £36,000 ring-fenced in 2020-21 for these items, as part of the total General Reserve Fund maintained in each year. These figures are not cumulative, as the projects are carried out, monies will be withdrawn from the provisions contained in the General Reserve Fund to cover the actual expenditure incurred.

FIN.08.12.17 HERSTMONCEUX GRANTS SCHEME:

The Chairman, Councillor Bradshaw, suggested that this item should be deferred to the January F&GP Committee meeting, so that papers prepared but not yet circulated by Councillor Stewart and himself could be taken into account in the Committee's discussions.

FIN.09.12.17 REMEMBRANCE POPPIES:

The meeting discussed that the Parish Council should have discussions with other clubs and organisations from within the parish and have a meeting in the early part of next year to discuss the 100th World War 1 commemorations and the future of the parish commemorating 'Remembrance Day' in future years. Councillor Stewart suggested that he drafted an appropriate invitation letter to be sent out inviting representatives from the various clubs and organisations to a meeting. The meeting agreed.

FIN.10.12.17 INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT:

The RFO had received an Interim Audit report on the current years accounts and governance. The Internal Auditor had found nothing wrong and in general had found the Parish Council's internal controls to be strong.

The Internal Auditor had suggested that periodically that maybe it would be an additional internal control if Councillors were to 'test check' items of expenditure through from its authorisation, its payment, and its reflection in the Parish Council's bank statements.

Councillor Bradshaw was in favour of anything that would even further strengthen the Parish Council's internal controls. The meeting discussed this matter with the RFO, and it is **RECOMMENDED to FULL COUNCIL** that the nominated Councillor responsible for the variation of the quarterly Bank Reconciliation, should also carry out a test check of a small number of expenditure items, picked at random. A report of the items be made and reported to Full Council.

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

FIN.11.12.17 TENDER TIMETABLE:

The RFO stated that under the Verge-cutting Tender, that was currently out with prospective contractors, there was the requirement for at least two Members as well as the officers to officially open and record the Tenders received at NOON on Friday, 05 January 2018. The meeting discussed the matter and it was agreed that Councillors Mrs Alder, Bradshaw, and Nash, together with the Clerk

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and RFO comprise the Tender opening committee.

FIN.12.12.17 F&GP POLICIES:

The Clerk had done a tremendous amount of work in preparing various Policies that the Parish Council needed to be put in place. The checking and review of the various policies written was to be devolved to the appropriate committees prior to be referred back to Full Council for adoption. Two of these policies are to be discussed and reviewed by the F&GP Committee and a further four by the Personnel Sub-Committee. The RFO suggested that the committees undertook a policy or a couple of policies per meeting, with the intention of clearing all by 31 March 2018. It was agreed that the Data Protection Policy should await discussion until after the Data Protection training taking place on 01 February 2018. This was agreed by the Members.

FIN.13.12.17 BANKING ARRANGEMENTS:

Unity Trust Bank had notified the Parish Council that due to the recent increase in the bank rate, the interest rate on the Council's Tailored Deposit Account is to be raised to 0.20% as from 03 November 2017.

FIN.14.12.17 FORMER PUBLIC CONVENIENCES:

The RFO enquired of the Clerk whether there was any further news regarding the Licence from Wealden District Council in respect of the Public Conveniences, Hailsham Road, Herstmonceux. The Clerk stated that she had no further contact with Wealden District Council.

Councillor Stewart suggested that the Clerk writes to Wealden District Council asking after a draft Licence, more to re-assure Wealden that the Parish Council of its continued interest in the property and its intention to put these back into use.

The RFO asked that he be informed as soon as possible if there was a requirement for the parish Council to insure the building.

FIN.15.12.17 DEFIBRILLATOR, WINDMILL HILL:

The meeting had discussed this under FIN.06.12.17, item 4. Nothing else to report

FIN.16.12.17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting of the F&GP Committee is scheduled for Monday, 08 January 2018, commencing at 7.30pm. Venue Herstmonceux Village Hall.

FIN.17.12.17 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING: The RFO records that the following items will appear on the agenda for the next meeting:

1. HIGHWAY TENDER 2018-19

To receive the tenders from contractors, opened at noon on Friday 5th January 2018, and to discuss and select a contractor for the Highways Verge-cutting contract for 2018-19.

2. ANNUAL ESTIMATES - 3rd and Final Version:

To receive copies of the 3rd and Final version of the Revised Estimates 2017/18, and Original Estimates 2018/19, together

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with provisions for the two further years 2019/20, and 2020/21.

3. **PRECEPT 2018-19**

To set the Precept for Herstmonceux Parish for 2018-19

4. **POLICY REVIEW**

To review Email and Internet Policy.

FIN.18.12.17 CLOSE OF MEETING:

There being no other business, the Chairman, Councillor Bradshaw thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 21.07 pm

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **EASTBOURNE FIRST RESPONDERS:** The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that a donation £100 be made to Eastbourne First Responders. Proposed: Councillor Mrs J. Angear; Seconded: Councillor Bradshaw; All Members in favour.
2. **PURCHASE OF CHRITMAS TREE LIGHTS:** Authorisation for the reimbursement of £51.87 for the lights purchased was given to the RFO to reimburse Councillor Stewart. Proposed: Councillor Mrs Angear; Seconded: Councillor Nash; All other Members in favour.
3. **WINDMILL HILL TELEPHONE BOX:** The matter is to be included on the Agenda for the December Full Council.
4. **INTERNAL CONTROLS: RECOMMENDED to FULL COUNCIL** that the nominated Councillor responsible for the variation of the quarterly Bank Reconciliation, should also carry out a test check of a small number of expenditure items, picked at random. A report of the items be made and reported to Full Council.
5. **TENDER OPENING:** The meeting discussed the matter and it was agreed that Councillors Mrs Alder, Bradshaw, and Nash, together with the Clerk and RFO comprise the Tender opening committee.