

## HERSTMONCEUX PARISH COUNCIL

### Agenda Item: Committee Reports – Finance & General Purposes Committee

**MINUTES** of the Meeting of the **Finance and General Purposes Committee** held on **Monday 08 January 2018** at the Lounge, Herstmonceux Village Hall, Hailsham Road, Herstmonceux.

Present: Councillors: Mrs J. Angear, M. Bradshaw (Chairman), 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.01.01.18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Councillor M. Goodsell.

**FIN.02.01.18 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTERESTS:**

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

Councillor S. Nash – Herstmonceux Village Information Centre.

Councillor I. Stewart – Herstmonceux Village Hall

**FIN.03.01.18 DISPENSATION REQUESTS:** None.

**FIN.04.01.18 PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS:** None.

**FIN.05.01.18 PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE:**

Councillor Stewart, provided a verbal report on the Personnel Sub-Committee held prior to the Finance & General Purposes Meeting.

The meeting discussed the five Policy documents as prepared by The Clerk viz. 1. Grievance Policy, 2. Disciplinary Policy, 3. Health & Safety Policy, 4. Lone Worker Policy, and 5. East Sussex Pension Fund Discretions Policy.

The meeting raised issues on the Lone Worker Policy suggesting that the Clerk should be provided with a personal alarm to be available for use whilst working in the Parish Office or out on site. Councillor Bradshaw raised the requirement under EU Regulations that Lone Workers should have an Emergency Telephone Number of an Elected Member to use, and that procedures for all staff to report in on commencement of work, whether at the Parish Office or at home, and again to report when signing off work to an Elected Member.

The Grievance Policy is a complicated piece containing various requirements to set up a panel of Elected Members to investigate grievances and for the Chairman of the Parish Council to stand aside because of being the person that has to determine Grievances, in many cases. The Policy, as written, is inconsistent in this respect.

A meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee is to be convened towards the end of January to review these outstanding Policy matters with a view of being able to recommend approval of the Policies to Full Council, via the February Finance & General Purposes Committee.

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The Sub-Committee discussed the RFO retiring on 31 March 2018, and proposed to seek replacement by externally advertising the post using the SALC Recruitment service. The RFO was also asked to bring the vacancy to the attention of any suitable person and to Wealden District Council so that any interested persons can apply via SALC.

The Sub-Committee discussed whether the position should be combined with the role of The Clerk, but it was agreed that the two positions should be kept separate. The Clerk, however, would like to be trained together with the new RFO, so that there is 'built-in' cover for sickness and holiday absence for both posts, in future.

The Personnel Sub-Committee recognises that the RFO is the required "151 Officer", responsible for all the finances of the Parish Council, and should possess the necessary experience and/or qualifications.

An Interview Panel comprising of Members of the Personnel Sub-Committee and the Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee will be required for the appointment of the new RFO.

The Meeting agreed with the overall requirements and recruitment of a new RFO, and **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that:

1. The post of RFO remain as a separate post on the Parish Council's establishment.
2. That the post of RFO should be advertised, as soon as possible, and approval of appropriate recruitment costs.
3. That the SALC Recruitment Service be used for this purpose.
4. That training of the new RFO should be undertaken by Mr Goacher, terms and conditions to be negotiated, and that The Clerk also be trained.
5. That the posts of Clerk and RFO should interact to provide adequate absence cover for the Parish Council in future.
6. That the Interview Panel should consist of members of the Personnel Sub-Committee and the Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee or designated member of the F&GP Committee.

All members in favour.

### **FIN.06.01.18 CURRENT YEAR EXPENDITURE:**

1. **Entrance to the Allotments Site:** Councillor Bradshaw brought to the attention of the meeting that the actual entrance, through the gateway, on to the allotments site is extremely dangerous to all plot-holders because of the extremely wet weather conditions, being very waterlogged and muddy. Councillor Bradshaw suggested that the Parish Council purchase a load of MOT Type 1 or road planings to resolve the problem. Councillor Mrs Angear suggested that the area would need to be 'dug-out' first, otherwise, it would be a waste of money just to dump a load of hardcore on the current waterlogged and muddy area. The RFO asked if the area was inside the gate, therefore, completely within the allotment site. Councillor Bradshaw stated that it was partly on the outside. The Clerk remarked that if Mr Love and his staff was to dig the area out and the Parish Council purchase the hardcore, this would be like a 'matched

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funding' arrangement. The meeting agreed.

Members urged to have a look at the allotments site entrance, as soon as possible.

The Meeting recognised that this was a Health & Safety issue, and agreed that the matter needed immediate attention. Councillor Bradshaw would seek the cost of the required load of MOT Type 1 and arrange with Mr Love to have the area suitably prepared, and liaise with Clerk and RFO to get the work done.

The Meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the matter be dealt with under emergency procedures in place, costs up to £250. All Members in favour.

2. **Street Lighting:** Following the issuing of a Works Order for the installation of two new lights in Hailsham Road (A271), Mr Eric Ware of East Sussex County Council, stating that UKPN will not agree to brackets being mounted on their poles, but have agreed to provide a supply to adjacent columns. The cost to install a column instead of the pole bracket is £2,130.21 plus VAT. This would be for the supply and installation of a 5mtr column and 16 Led axia lantern with all night cell including the UKPN connection. The meeting discussed the matter and asked the Clerk to arrange a meeting with Mr Eric Ware to discuss this matter further, before accepting any proposals.
3. **Lease of the Allotment Site:** The Clerk had been notified by Dawn Cole, Solicitor at Invicta Law, acting for the Parish Council in the matter of a new Lease of the Allotments site, that she had exceeded the original estimate of legal costs. The original cost of £750, had now reached £803, due to having to chase Mr Love to return the Lease. The only work outstanding was to receive and check the Title, once registered at HM Land Registry and then reporting back to the Parish Council. The Meeting noted the position.
4. **Additional Hours Claim, The Clerk:** The RFO reported that the Clerk had submitted the required record of hours worked between the 01 October 2017 and 31 December 2017 and that the Clerk had worked and was claiming 22.50 additional hours. The Meeting approved the claim and **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that payment be made to The Clerk together with the February 2018 payroll. All members in Favour.

### FIN.07.01.18 TENDERS – HIGHWAY VERGE-CUTTING 2018:

The RFO reported that three Tender documents had been received and opened in the presence of Elected Members. The Tenders received were as follows:

- |                                      |           |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Honeysett Groundcare              | £ 5620.00 |
| 2. Orchard Landscapes Ltd            | £ 5998.63 |
| 3. Tim Jordan Ground Maintenance Ltd | £ 5634.00 |

The meeting discussed the three tenders fully, each appeared to have all the required certification needed by the East Sussex Highways Authority, and all had the required Public Liability Insurance cover of £10m. The RFO stated that he had sent for references to referees in the cases of Honeysett Groundcare and Tim Jordan Maintenance Ltd, Orchard Landscapes Ltd being the current contractor.

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After extensive discussion the meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the acceptance of the tender from Honeysett Groundcare in the sum of £5620.00 be accepted, subject to satisfactory references being received.

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

### **FIN.08.01.18 ANNUAL ESTIMATES:**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 December meeting.

The RFO stated that he had increased the provision covering the Highways Verge-cutting contract to £6000 for 2018-19 and subsequent years.

The RFO informed the meeting that as the estimates stood before the meeting the required Precept amounted to £75,880.00, an increase of 9.61% over the current year Precept level.

The meeting recognised that 1.5% of the increase was due directly to the reduction in the Council Tax Support Grant from £2,500 to £1,650 for 2018-19, and that in future years the Council Tax Support Grant assistance would be wiped out completely.

The RFO prepared a document showing the effects of reducing the Precept level for further consideration of the meeting.

After further discussion the meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the General Reserve, (unfenced provision), be reduced by £1,500 to £3,500, and that the overall provision for Grants of £8,500 be reduced to £8,000, thus reducing the required Precept to £73,880 for 2018-19, an increase of 6.72% over the current year.

The meeting further **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that a Precept of £73,880.00 plus the Council Tax Support Grant of £1,650.00, totalling £75,530.00 be levied on Wealden District Council for the financial year 2018-19.

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

### **FIN.09.01.18 HERSTMONCEUX GRANTS SCHEME:**

The RFO circulated papers showing the proposed Grants Scheme Policy, the website version, prepared by Councillors Bradshaw and Stewart, and an amended Grant Application Form prepared by the RFO for consideration by the meeting in reviewing the Parish Council's Grant Scheme.

Councillor Mrs Angear, asked if the matter could be deferred to the February F&GP Committee, as she had not had time to absorb all the proposed changes.

The meeting agreed and asked the RFO to place this on the Agenda for the February meeting.

### **FIN.10.01.18 POLICY REVIEW – EMAIL & INTERNET POLICY:**

Members of the meeting had not received a copy of the proposed Email & Internet Policy. The Clerk said that this had been circulated with other policies some while ago, and agreed to re-circulate this. The matter was

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deferred to the February meeting.

### **FIN.11.01.18 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME:**

The RFO brought to the attention of the meeting the Report of the Wealden Parish Remuneration Panel on Town and Parish Councillor Allowances for 2018-19. The Panel's report proposed an increase in the maximum Basic Allowance, for Herstmonceux Parish Council from £156 per annum to £160, and the maximum Chairman's Allowance from £269 to £275 per annum.

The meeting discussed the proposals and **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that there is no increase made to the Herstmonceux Members' Allowance Scheme and that the Basic Allowance remains at £156 per annum and the Chairman's Allowance at £269 per annum.

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

### **FIN.12.01.18 GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR):**

The Clerk reported to the meeting that the RFO and herself had worked through the proposed Data Protection schedule, which although now has been scrapped, did assist in highlighting the position of the Parish Council in the light of the new Regulations and gave a focus on what was needed of the Parish Council in other policies, such as its Risk Management Policy, to conform to the new Regulations.

The Clerk and RFO reminded the meeting that all members of the F&GP Committee had been booked to attend the GDPR Compliance Training to be held on 01 February 2018, at the **Fleur de Lys meeting room at Hailsham Town Council offices, Inglenook, Market Street, Hailsham, BN27 2AE**. The training will start at 2pm and finish at 4.30pm, teas and coffees will be available.

### **FIN.13.01.18 RECIPROCAL AGREEMENT – AERIAL TREE CUTTING:**

The Clerk had requested this to be brought before the F&GP Committee, but after further investigation the matter was found not to be applicable to the Parish Council.

### **FIN.14.01.18 STREET LIGHTING MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT:**

The RFO had received new rates applicable as from 01 April 2018 in respect of the Street Lighting Maintenance Agreement with East Sussex County Council.

|                |                |         |
|----------------|----------------|---------|
| Current Rates: | 5/6mtr column  | £ 25.00 |
|                | 8/10mtr column | £ 34.00 |
|                | Feeder Pillars | £ 12.00 |
| New Rates:     | 5/6mtr column  | £ 25.00 |
|                | 8/10mtr column | £ 33.00 |
|                | Feeder Pillars | £ 17.00 |

The meeting noted the increase in the rates for Feeder Pillars, several of which were in existence within the parish.

### **FIN.15.01.18 INTERNAL CONTROLS – REGISTRATION OF HPC ASSET ITEMS:**

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The RFO reported that at the request of Councillor Mrs Kenward that the internal controls on Members and Staff having use of or being in possession of HPC assets and items to be able to carry out their duties should be formally acknowledged by a signature both on acquisition of the asset/item, and again on its return. The RFO refer to items such as computer equipment, BarclayCards, keys etc. It was agreed by the meeting that to keep a record of HPC owned items was an essential part of the Council's internal controls, and it was agreed that the RFO and Clerk should implement a system as soon as is feasible.

### **FIN.16.01.18 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

The next meeting of the F&GP Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, 06 February 2018, commencing at 7.30pm. Venue Herstmonceux Village Information Centre Meeting Room.

### **FIN.17.01.18 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

The RFO records that the following items will appear on the agenda for the next meeting:

#### **1. HERSTMONCEUX GRANTS SCHEME**

To undertake a review of the Herstmonceux Grants Scheme, agree Grants Policy wording, website advertisement of the Scheme, and the Application Form.

Recommend the Scheme to Full Council to be implemented as from 01 April 2018.

#### **2. GENERAL DATA PROTECTION:**

To identify a timetable to introduce required policies, and update the Risk Management Policy to cover required aspects of the new GDPR.

#### **3. POLICY REVIEW:**

To receive copies of the proposed Email & Internet Policy, to agree and recommend its implementation to Full Council.

#### **3. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES:**

To receive an update as to the licence from Wealden District Council, and recommend its adoption to Full Council.

To seek suitable quotations for the refurbishment of the building, to apply for monies awarded under Wealden District Council's Communal Toilet Scheme, to set timetable for the re-opening of the public toilets to the general public.

#### **4. STREET LIGHTING**

To receive report back on the current position regarding the installation of two new lights in Hailsham Road, following a meeting with Eric Ware of ESCC Highways, and make any further recommendations to Full Council.

### **FIN.18.01.18 CLOSE OF MEETING:**

There being no other business, the Chairman, Councillor Bradshaw thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 20.54 pm

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### **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**RECRUITMENT OF RFO:** The Meeting agreed with the overall requirements and recruitment of a new RFO, and **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that:

1. The post of RFO remain as a separate post on the Parish Council's establishment.
2. That the post of RFO should be advertised, as soon as possible, and approval of appropriate recruitment costs.
3. That the SALC Recruitment Service be used for this purpose.
4. That training of the new RFO should be undertaken by Mr Goacher, terms and conditions to be negotiated, and that The Clerk also be trained.
5. That the posts of Clerk and RFO should interact to provide adequate absence cover for the Parish Council in future.
6. That the Interview Panel should consist of members of the Personnel Sub-Committee and the Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

All Members in Favour

**ALLOTMENTS SITE ENTRANCE:** The Meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the matter be dealt with under emergency procedures in place, costs up to £250. All Members in favour.

**THE CLERK – ADDITIONAL HOURS WORKED (22.50hrs):** The Meeting approved the claim and **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that payment be made to The Clerk together with the February 2018 payroll. All members in Favour.

**HIGHWAY VERGE-CUTTING TENDER 2018:** The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the acceptance of the tender from Honeysett Groundcare in the sum of £5620.00 be accepted, subject to satisfactory references being received.

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

**ANNUAL ESTIMATES and PRECEPT 2018-19:** The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the General Reserve, (unfenced provision), be reduced by £1,500 to £3,500, and that the overall provision for Grants of £8,500 be reduce to £8,000, thus reducing the required Precept to £73,880 for 2018-19, an increase of 6.72% over the current year.

The meeting further **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that a Precept of £73,880.00 plus the Council Tax Support Grant of £1,650.00, totalling £75,530.00 be levied on Wealden District Council for the financial year 2018-19.

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