

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 06 February 2018** at the Meeting Room, The Village Information Centre, The Old Forge, Gardner Street, Herstmonceux.

Present: Councillors: Mrs J. Angear, M. Bradshaw (Chairman), M. T. 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: Councillor Mrs Alder attended for the Recreation Access Road discussion.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

None.

2. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTERESTS:

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

Councillor M. Goodsell – Various local contracts

Councillor S. Nash – Herstmonceux Village Information Centre.

Councillor I. Stewart – Herstmonceux Village Hall

3. DISPENSATION REQUESTS: None.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS: None.

5. 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 position of the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) in particular the Job Description, the Salary Scale, the recruitment, and working arrangements.

The Job Description had been looked at in great detail and amended by both Councillors and latterly by the current RFO. A copy of the agreed Job Description was handed to the Clerk for recruitment processing.

The local Herstmonceux Salary Scale for the RFO position was discussed at length, and discussions took into account the current RFO Salary Scale and that of the Clerk to the Parish Council. The Sub-Committee sought the advice of the RFO as to general salary levels and compared these of the current staff salary levels. It was agreed to advertise the position on a Herstmonceux Local Salary Scale of SCP 23 (£21,268.00/£11.0540 per hour) to SCP 30 (£26,822.00/£13.9407 per hour) pro-rata. The Scale would provide some flexibility to the interview panel to be able to appoint on a suitable SCP to reflect the preferred candidate's experience and ability.

The duties of the RFO post was also looked at in detail and amended by both Councillors and the current RFO to reflect the requirements of the Parish Council. These were agreed.

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The contractual hours would be set at an average of 10 hours per week, the average being a requirement to level out the peaks and troughs caused by the requirement of more hours being worked during the preparation of the annual estimates and final accounts.

The RFO would be based at the Parish Office, Herstmonceux and required to work out of the office premises.

The Clerk was instructed to contact and use the recruitment service offered by Surrey & Sussex Association of Local Councils.

It was envisaged that the closing date for receipt of applications would be Friday 09 March 2018, with interviews to take place during week commencing 19 March 2018.

It was agreed that the Personnel Sub-Committee proposals for the recruitment of a replacement RFO be accepted. Proposed: Councillor Stewart, Seconded: Councillor Nash; All Members in favour.

6. CURRENT YEAR EXPENDITURE:

1. **New wall heater for the Parish Office:** An emergency decision had been taken by Members of the F&GP Committee to have supplied and installed a new wall heater in the Parish Office, to ensure that The Clerk, worked in a comfortable and warm environment, and that the Parish Office could be kept at a reasonable temperature whilst not in use. The RFO reported that on instructions from the Chairman of the Council he had issued an appropriate Works Order to MAS Systems for the supply and installation of a new 1Kw wall heater to replace the existing heater at a cost of £303.60 plus VAT.
2. **Water Supply & Wastewater:** The RFO reported that South East Water had notified the Parish Council that Water Choice would be the new retailer of both water supply and wastewater as from 01 April 2018. The RFO reminded the meeting that this would only affect the Parish Council in respect of the water supply to the Recreation Ground, and not the Parish Office, which was covered by the standing charges paid to the Rural Community Support Society, as its landlord.

7. RECREATION GROUND ACCESS ROAD – APPOINTMENT OF PROJECT CONSULTANT:

The meeting had two proposals and quotations from suitable project consultants in respect of the Recreation Access Road.

Mr Patrick Coffey: up to a maximum global fee of £5,000.00

Lawson Queay an initial study fee of £1,995.00 plus VAT, plus hourly rates for a Chartered Building Surveyor of £125.00 per hour and a Senior Building Surveyor at £110.00 per hour.

The meeting identified that the two consultants' quotations were given on a slightly differing basis. Mr Coffey's quotation was to overall project management for the whole project, whilst Lawson Queay was an initial feasibility study and then project manage the project using certain levels of surveyors.

The meeting discussed the pros and cons of the two and each Member present was given the opportunity to provide their individual comments.

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The Chairman of F&GP Committee, took the overall comments into account and Proposed to **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL** that the Parish Council engage the services of Mr Patrick Coffey, at a maximum fee of £5,000; Seconded; Councillor Mrs Kenward; All Members in favour.

A report from Councillor Nash on matters of drainage when upgrading of the access road takes place. During the process an existing drainage pipe under the access road had been revealed connected to a manhole on the property of Mr & Mrs Gent. At the time of the access road clearance this drainage pipe was unblocked, releasing a considerable head of water. Mr & Mrs Gent had been contacted and it was discovered that they had encountered severe flooding issues in their garden area. In order to clear the garden area Mr Gent had installed a pump initially on top of the manhole cover and attempted to 'rod' the pipes but met with blockages. Councillor Nash sought the permission of the Council to check the drainage situation and to determine whether any root damage had occurred, if for no other reason than to mitigate any responsibility in future. Permission was agreed.

8. **HERSTMONCEUX GRANTS SCHEME:**

The meeting had been circulated with a copy of the proposed new Grants Scheme Policy, the text regarding the Scheme to be used on the Council's website, and a new version of the Grant Application Form.

The Chairman of F&GP, Councillor Bradshaw proposed that the revised Grant Scheme, as set out in the documentation, be **RECOMMENDED to FULL COUNCIL** for immediate adoption, and that the website be amended accordingly to incorporate the detail of the revised Grant Scheme, and to include access to the new Grant Application Form. Seconded; Councillor Stewart; All Members in favour.

9. **GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR):**

Councillor Bradshaw informed the meeting that the new General Data Protection Regulations Bill had passed through Parliament and was now awaiting the Royal Assent.

The General Data Protection Regulations has been in force in the Europe since October 2016. The latest training experienced by Members of the F&GP Committee, The Clerk and RFO, saw that much of the basis to these new Regulations should have been complied with by organisations since the introduction of the Data Protection Act 1998.

The Parish Council had made a start in identifying its data, sources of data, use of data, places of data being held, and this must be an ongoing exercise. Although the date which organisations must comply with the new Regulations, being 25 May 2018, it is for organisations to have made a start and are seen to be working towards the aims of the new Regulations to avoid any penalties which will be levied.

The Clerk indicated to the meeting that records of data, and that a general data cleansing exercise had been started and would continue as time permitted.

It was generally accepted through the training that SSALC and NALC appears to be in a mess, over the new Regulations, and are not yet able to provide any guidance or advice to local councils.

Arising from the training course, Councillor Bradshaw had asked the RFO to

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look into the costs of the provision of a 'Sim only' deal for the Clerk to have a mobile telephone. The RFO provided information on 'Sim only' deals from various suppliers, stating that he had looked at deals not exceeding £20 per month. Councillor Nash observed that the Council would need to provide two mobile telephones, one for the Clerk and one for the RFO. Councillor Stewart agreed and proposed that Councillor Bradshaw and the RFO look at costs and undertake a presentation to Full Council on the provision of the two mobile telephones on a 'Sim only' basis. All Members agreed.

The Clerk felt that Data Protection was not just for the F&GP Committee to be concerned but for the Amenities Committee in respect of Allotments data, and the Communications Committee in respect of the website and all other forms of communication both internally and externally.

A meeting of the Communications Committee was **RECOMMENDED** as soon as possible.

10. **POLICY REVIEW:**

The Clerk presented two Policies that she had written and amended:

1. Email and Internet Policy: The Clerk took the meeting through the Policy, identifying changes to clauses 1.3, 2.4, 2.1, 4.4. A further change to the wording of clause 2.1 was discussed.

Overall, it was generally thought that all emails, internally, should be undertaken by Members under their official email address only, and that all emails were copied into the Clerk. Councillor Bradshaw believed the use of each official email could be made to automatically copy to the Clerk. This suggestion was to be investigated, but in the meantime the Clerk is to be copied-in.

2. Grievance Policy: The Clerk had circulated copies of the Grievance Policy, changed in line with various suggestions by Councillor Stewart. The main points discussed was the ability of the Chairman of the Council to remain outside any procedures, and that the Policy dealt with the formation of a Grievance Sub-Committee (minimum of any three Members of the Council) to investigate and to hear the grievance. The Policy reinforces the prevention of any Member with direct involvement of a grievance from the overall procedure.
3. Lone Worker Policy: Councillor Bradshaw stated that this would be referred to the F&GP Committee once the Risk Assessment Policy, to which it was closely linked, had been formulated.

Councillor Bradshaw proposed to **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL** that the changes to the Email and Internet Policy, and the Grievance Policy, as discussed, be adopted. Seconded; Councillor Stewart, All Members in favour.

11. **PUBLIC CONVENIENCES:**

The Clerk reported to the meeting that Wealden District Council's Legal Department were finalising the Licence, and that a copy of the draft Licence would be forwarded to the Parish Council in the next few days.

The initial cleaning of the building would be undertaken any day this coming week. Once the cleaning had been undertaken the RFO would be able to issue a Works Order to Mr Angear, Angear Builders, to undertake an

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inspection of the property and prepare a Schedule of Works, at a cost of £250.00.

From the Schedule of Works report, the Parish Council would be able to 'go out' to tender for the required works to be carried out.

The position of the insurance of the building would form part of the Licence conditions, which was awaited.

12. **STREET LIGHTING MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT:**

Councillor Bradshaw informed the meeting that there was a meeting arranged with Mr Eric Ware of East Sussex Highways to discuss the required two additional lights in Hailsham Road.

The Parish Council's Street Lighting Working Group were still to complete its inventory of the street lighting within the parish.

13. **THE OLD SURGERY GARDEN AREA:**

The meeting discussed the maintenance of the garden area at the Old Surgery, West End, Herstmonceux. Councillor Stewart had read the current Lease and described the Lease as 'vague' on the matter of the garden area. Councillor Goodsell had undertaken some maintenance in respect of the growth of ivy on fencing, in the past. Councillor Stewart stated as there had been no complaints from the current tenants the matter should rest until it came to negotiate a new tenancy agreement.

14. **VILLAGE HALL ACCESS ROAD – PARKING PROBLEMS:**

Arising from a meeting with Doctor Simmons, the meeting was informed despite the measures taken by staff at the pharmacy to provide as much assistance to vulnerable and disabled persons by assisting delivery of medicines to their vehicles, if required, and encouragement in general to have prescriptions delivered to homes, the problem of parking in the access road had not been resolved. A letter with the Surgery, Pharmacy and Parish Council's logos reminding people that parking in the access road is not permitted, has not had a great impact on the problem.

Proposals to have two boxed areas painted on the access road containing the words 'No Parking' was now up for discussion. An estimate had been obtained by Doctor Simmons for such markings, costing £450 plus VAT. The Doctor had asked if the Parish Council would contribute towards the costs involved.

Councillor Stewart proposed to **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL** that the Parish Council take over the project and pay for the box junction markings and recharge half the costs to Doctor Simmons. Seconded; Councillor Nash; All Members in favour.

Councillor Stewart asked the Clerk to ensure that the matter of the easement with Doctor Simmons is referred for discussion at the next meeting of Full Council.

15. **INTERNAL CONTROLS – REGISTRATION OF HPC ASSET ITEMS:**

The Clerk reported that she had set up a spreadsheet recording who had keys, computers etc., belonging to the Parish Council.

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The meeting asked that individual sheets could be prepared with details of each item listed on an individual basis, so that the individual concerned could sign stating their receipt of the items, and conversely when returned the Parish Council could sign to acknowledge the return of those items.

16. PHOTOCOPIER REVIEW:

The RFO had brought to the attention of the Clerk and Members of the F&GP Committee, an offer from Principal to change the existing photocopier unit which showed a savings of £32.07 per quarter based on current usage. The Clerk reported that the current machine had been causing problems in recent weeks and that engineers from Principal, had spent time on resolving the problems but were pointing out that the machine was now considered to be very old.

The RFO supported the Clerk in stating that the Clerk's output had been marred by the problems that the Clerk had been experiencing and knew that on one occasion an engineer was in attendance for some time in sorting out the machine.

The usage of the photocopying machine had been greater over the last 18 months because of the additional work required on the Neighbourhood Plan, and it was appreciated that this would not necessarily reduce as the requirement for the new RFO to work within the office would increase its normal use to some extent.

The meeting discussed the matter and **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the offer of a new machine from Principal be accepted.

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

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

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

18. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING:

No items identified.

19. CLOSE OF MEETING:

There being no other business, the Chairman, Councillor Bradshaw thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 21.40 pm

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **RECRUITMENT OF RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER (RFO):**
Herstmonceux Local Salary Scale for RFO of SCP 23 (£21,268.00/£11.0540 per hour) to SCP 30 (£26,822.00/£13.9407 per hour) pro-rata. Contractual Hours Average of 10 hours per week. The RFO would be based at the Parish Office, Herstmonceux and required to work out of the office premises. Use of SSALC Recruitment Service. Closing date for receipt of applications would be Friday 09 March 2018, with interviews to take place during week commencing 19 March 2018.

It was agreed that the Personnel Sub-Committee proposals for the recruitment of a replacement RFO be accepted. Proposed: Councillor Stewart, Seconded: Councillor Nash; All Members in favour.
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5. **GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR):** A meeting of the Communications Committee was **RECOMMENDED** as soon as possible.
6. **VILLAGE HALL ACCESS ROAD – PARKING PROBLEMS:** Councillor Stewart proposed to **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL** that the Parish Council take over the project and pay for the box junction markings and recharge half the costs to Doctor Simmons. Seconded; Councillor Nash; All Members in favour.

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