

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 13 March 2018** at the Small Hall, Herstmonceux Village Hall, Hailsham Road, Herstmonceux.

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

S. Goacher, RFO, took the Minutes,

Members of the Public: None.

FIN.01.03.18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillor S. Nash.

FIN.02.03.18 FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE COMPOSITION:

The Clerk stated that this item was added to the original Agenda because she had received a Councillor's resignation and a subsequent retraction of that resignation, and that it was required to obtain advice from the Monitoring Officer on how to deal with this matter. A meeting with the Monitoring Officer could not be arranged until the afternoon of the day of the scheduled F&GP Committee meeting, which was subsequently cancelled.

Councillor Stewart advised the meeting that there were other items that were ongoing concerning a Councillor, which are to be reported to Full Council. Councillor Mrs Angear, requested of the Clerk, full paperwork to be given in respect of the outstanding matters of concern.

FIN.03.03.18 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTERESTS:

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

Councillor M. Goodsell – Various local contracts

Councillor I. Stewart – Herstmonceux Village Hall

FIN.04.03.18 DISPENSATION REQUESTS: None.

FIN.05.03.18 PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS: None.

FIN.06.03.18 PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE:

Councillor Stewart reported that the initial Risk Assessment reviews perceived risks of a Lone Worker in the premises of the Parish Council at the Parish Office and that Councillor Bradshaw had looked through this and had made certain suggestions, the Risk Assessment as amended to be circulated to all Councillors for Full Council

FIN.07.03.18 CURRENT YEAR EXPENDITURE:

1. **The Parish Office - Standing Charges:** The RFO informed the meeting that he had received notice from the Rural Community Support Society, Landlords in respect of the Parish Office, that due to increases in electricity charges, the Annual Standing Charge would have to be increased from

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£360 per annum to £380 per annum. The RFO stated that this could be absorbed within the existing estimates.

The meeting noted the increase and the RFO's assurance that the increase was minimal.

2. **East Sussex County Council Verge-Cutting Contribution:** The RFO reported that although Councillor Bentley, County Councillor, had informed the Parish Council that East Sussex County Council were to reduce contributions to Town and Parish Councils who had taken on highway grass-cutting, notice had been received that as the Parish Council had been proactive and engaged Honeysett Groundcare for the 2018-19 contract, the contribution for the financial year 2018-19 would NOT be reduced.
3. **The Telephone Box, Windmill Hill:** Mr Willis, of 'Bit of This, Bit of That' had carried out the refurbishment work required to the telephone box at Windmill Hill, and the RFO had received his account in the sum of £876.00. The meeting noted that this was in accordance with the quotation given, although Mr Willis had had to apply two coats of paint instead of the one included in the quotation.
4. **Local Government Pension Scheme – Employer Contributions:** Notification had been received that the Employers Contributions to the Local Government Pension Scheme for 2018-19 would be 22.10%, This rate had been included in the Annual Estimates and had been calculated for both the Clerk and RFO, should the new RFO wish to join the Scheme. The RFO indicated to the meeting that the Employers Contribution would again rise by a further 0.50% in 2019-20. The meeting noted this.
5. **CiLCA Qualification:** The RFO reported that the Clerk had commenced the CiLCA course last year but due to the amount of work and the continuation of learning the job, together with personal health problems, had had to stop the course. The Clerk was now seeking permission to restart the CiLCA course and ask if the Parish Council would pay for the Registration and Course fees or a contribution towards these, estimated at approx. £500, to enable her to continue. Councillor Stewart stated that he felt that it was very important that the Parish Council ensure that staff are trained and given every facility to gain the required qualifications, which is to the advantage of the Parish Council. Councillor Mrs Angear agreed and added that all expenses incurred in attending such courses should be paid by the Parish Council. Proposed that it be **RECOMMENDED to FULL COUNCIL** that the required Registration Fees and Course fees, together with any out of pocket expenses for the Parish Clerk to continue with the CiLCA qualification be authorised. Proposed: Councillor Stewart; Seconded; Councillor Mrs Angear; All in Favour.
6. In connection with the study requirements for CiLCA, the Clerk stated that she would like to discuss the time restraints and other matters in connection with the requirements to continue with the course with Members of the Personnel Sub-Committee. The meeting noted this and thanked the Clerk.

FIN.08.03.18 RECREATION GROUND ACCESS ROAD:

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The Clerk had spoken to Mr Patrick Coffey, regarding the project plan and his request for clarification on various matters before proceeding with the project. The time that the Parish Council envisages the project to take to completion. The meeting discussed this point and it was agreed that up to 3 years for the various pre-construction elements of the project and the final finishing of the construction of the Access Road, therefore, by 31 March 2021. Councillor Stewart gave the opinion that when engaging Mr Coffey, the Parish Council was appointing a 'Project Manager' and realised that Mr Coffey would have to engage other professionals to carry out pre-construction reports etc, and of the construction itself. It was essential that at every stage of the project Mr Coffey would report back to the Parish Council, and it would be for the Parish Council to issue all Works Orders and other instructions for various elements and work on the project to be undertaken. Councillor Mrs Kenward supported this view. The meeting **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL** that Mr Coffey be advised that he should seek any professional help as required in the preparation of any pre-construction reports, that the requirement for such reports and engagement of Professionals to undertake these be reported to the Parish Council, and the engagement for all such reports and works on the project be issued direct from the Parish Council. That the overall time for the Access Road project be set for three years with the intention of its completion by 31 March 2021. Proposed: Councillor Stewart; Seconded: Councillor Mrs Kenward; All in Favour.

FIN.09.03.18 LIME CROSS SPORTS GROUND:

The Clerk reported to the meeting that an email had been received from the Parish Council's Legal Advisors stating that the transfer of the strip of land had been completed on 01 March 2018. The final documentation is awaited. Councillor Stewart advised the meeting that the Developers legal advisors would have to register the transaction of land with the Land Registry, and until that was done, legally the Parish Council cannot assume to be the owners of the strip of land. The Form TP1 will come through to the Parish Councils legal advisors and there will be an approx. £40 Land Registry fee chargeable to the Parish Council. However, Councillor Stewart saw no reason why the RFO could not issue the required Works Order for the stock proof fencing to be erected from now on. The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the transfer of land be noted and added to the Parish Council's Assets Register, and that authorisation for a Works Order now be issued for the erection of the stock proof fencing, and payment of any Land Registry Fees be authorised. Proposed; Councillor Stewart; Seconded; Councillor Bradshaw; All in Favour.

Subsequently, the Clerk was reminded to write accordingly to all the Sports Clubs involved, seeking a meeting as to their intentions, commitment, and aims in the development of the Lime Cross Sports Ground.

FIN.10.03.18 GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR):

The RFO read a letter received from the Chief Executive of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) concerning Data Protection, as follows:

"Whenever I meet with members recently at branch meetings or other events, the first question I am always asked is "When will we be receiving some simple easy-to-follow guidance about Data Protection and the GDPR?" Well, I am pleased to say that detailed guidance has now been prepared and it is being tested by the Board of Directors in respect of their own councils. We then expect to issue it to every SLCC member w/c 26th March. At this stage I would like to record my thanks to the members of the Advice Team who have worked

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so hard to put together a comprehensive suite of advice, guidance and model documents which we hope will meet the needs of most councils. We hope, by this time, to have received from the Information Commissioner's Office, greater clarity and more detailed guidance in respect of the circumstances in which clerks to small councils, who process minimal data, might be able to act as Data Protection Officer (DPO) without any conflict of interest arising. Rob Smith, Chief Executive. "

The Clerk said that the matter of advice of a Parish Council requiring the appointment of a Data Protection Officer (DPO) was still awaited. The Clerk has heard of small Parish Councils engaging outside organisations to act as their DPO for as little cost as £150 per annum. The Clerk gave her opinion that it may be a wise move for the Parish Council to look at what other small Parish Councils are doing in respect of DPO engagement and it may be beneficial for Herstmonceux to look at such organisations and the possible costs involved.

Councillor Bradshaw stated that the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) had latched on to the sudden development in organisations offering data protection advice and had recently issued advice that it may not be a requirement to engage outside GDPR auditors.

The Clerk stated that to work towards the requirements of GDPR, it may involve simple solutions such as the encryption of all computers, tablets, mobile telephones etc.

On the matter of Councillors emails, the Clerk has been in talks with Hailsham Town Council and Hellingly Parish Council who have engaged an IT firm to look at the Microsoft 365 packages. The Clerk stated that at present the Parish Council uses LCN which is free, but, is not enabled to work with Cloud based storage facilities.

It appears that rough costings of a 365 package would be £3.80 plus VAT per Councillor, and £9.80 plus Vat per staff user per month. The RFO stated this would cost approx. £60.60 (ex-Vat) per month.

Councillor Bradshaw informed the meeting that Microsoft 365 packages do not work with Apple products.

The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that a meeting of the Communications Committee be convened and that a representative from the IT firm be invited to speak at the Committee meeting. Proposed; Councillor Stewart; Seconded; Councillor Bradshaw; All in Favour.

FIN.11.03.18 END OF YEAR RESERVES:

The RFO had been asked to give an estimation of the amounts in the Reserve Funds as at the 31 March 2018. The RFO informed the meeting that apart from the Allotments Reserve Fund, all Reserve Funds would be valued and as shown in the recently adopted Annual Estimates for 2018-19. The Allotments Reserve was subject to the deficit that would be incurred during the financial year, now anticipated as £882.53. therefore, the amended Allotment Reserve Fund would stand at approx. £3,000.00.

Councillor Bradshaw had asked for this information because he felt that there was a need to 'Vire' monies for the costs involved of renewing the planning application/permission and any professional fees in respect of additional reports required in connection with the Lime Cross Sports Ground development. Councillor Bradshaw had estimated such costs to amount to £3,000.00.

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The RFO suggested to the meeting that virement of £1,000 from the provision for the stock proof fencing at Lime Cross, and the £2,000 legal fees provision in connection with the Sports Clubs would cover the required sum involved. Councillor Stewart said that the Legal Fees were not anticipated to be needed in the forthcoming financial year, and that this provision can be replaced at the next round of Annual Estimates preparation.

The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that £3,000 for the renewal of planning application/permission and associated reports, be authorised under **VIREMENT** procedures from the provision of stock proof fencing at Lime Cross (£1,000) and from the provision of any Legal Fees arising from the Sports Ground development (£2,000). Proposed; Councillor Bradshaw; Seconded; Councillor Stewart; All in Favour.

FIN.12.03.18 PUBLIC CONVENIENCES:

The Clerk reported to the meeting that Wealden District Council's Legal Department had now issued the Draft Licence in respect of the former Public Convenience property in Hailsham Road.

Wealden District Council had confirmed the various amendments to the Licence with the exception of:

Clause 3(k) – which states: not to apply for any planning permission in respect of the Property without the Council's (WDC) written consent (such consent not to be unreasonably withheld or delayed);

Clause 11 – which states: The Council enters into this licence in its capacity as Landowner in respect of the Council's Property and not in any other capacity and nothing in this licence shall restrict the Council's powers or rights as a Local Authority, Local Planning Authority or Statutory Body to perform any of its statutory functions.

The Parish Council has not been given any right to purchase the Property on the expiration of the Licence.

Councillor Stewart would be happy for the Parish Council to be provided with a Letter of Intent, as a document which would provide an agreement to purchase the Property would be very complicated.

The meeting suggested that Councillor Stewart have time to read through the licence, and with his solicitor background, be able to advise the Council if the licence is beneficial to the Council and is in order to be signed.

The Parish Council awaits the document containing the schedule of photographs from Wealden District Council.

The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that once scrutinised by Councillor Stewart, and that a suitable Letter of Intent and Schedule of Photographs are received, the Licence be accepted and signed on behalf of the Parish Council.

Proposed; Councillor Stewart; Seconded; Councillor Bradshaw; All in Favour.

Councillor Bradshaw asked the Clerk if the Schedule of Works had been received from Mr Paul Angear. The Clerk confirmed that she was still awaiting this.

FIN.13.03.18 STREET LIGHTING:

Councillor Bradshaw understood that the new lighting unit opposite to the

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entrance to the Village Hall/Surgery entrance on the A271, Hailsham Road will be installed shortly.

Councillor Bradshaw asked the RFO if a separate Works Order had been issued for any tree-cutting works required with the installation. The RFO stated that the Works Order issued combined the authorisation of tree-cutting work to be carried out and costed separately on any invoice issued by East Sussex County Council.

FIN.14.03.18 VILLAGE HALL ACCESS ROAD – BOX-JUNCTION MARKINGS:

The RFO reported that he still awaited the quotations sent to Dr Simmons, before he was able to issue the required Works Order.

FIN.15.03.18 FUNDING REQUEST:

The RFO had received a funding request from the Secretary of the Pevensey & Westham Junior Football Club to buy some new goals, training equipment and coaches qualifications. The Club had a lot of children from the parish of Herstmonceux, hence the request for funding.

The RFO contacted the Secretary asking for more information as to the actual numbers of children from the parish of Herstmonceux attending. Eventually, a reply was received stating that only 3 children from Herstmonceux attended the Club, and that it was unfair to proceed to ask for any funding of the Parish Council, in these circumstances.

The meeting took no action.

FIN.16.03.18 RETIREMENT OF RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER:

Councillor Bradshaw reported to the meeting that one late but accepted application for the post of Responsible Finance Officer, had been received. The meeting generally looked over the application and agreed that the applicant should be interviewed. The Clerk was asked to make the appropriate arrangements for Thursday 22 March 2018.

The RFO had highlighted six items which he felt needed to be dealt with in the circumstances of his retirement on 31 March 2018, these being:

1. Purchase of Money Manager Software Accountancy package (£95 plus VAT).
2. Acquisition or use of a computer for new RFO
3. Changes to access of 'Cloud' stored data on 'Dropbox' to enable new RFO to work and the initial continuation of current RFO for a period.
4. Changes required to Bank Authorisation – initial 'Hand-over' period.
5. Current use of official RFO email address and the requirement for a short term second email address for the current RFO during hand-over period, Final Accounts period, and training period.
6. Hand-over of RFO documentation and storage.

Councillor Stewart said that he did not disagree with the points brought to the attention of the meeting, by the RFO.

Councillor Stewart reported that he had asked the RFO to write a draft Agreement for continued, but completely separate employment beyond his

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Retirement date of 31 March 2018 and read to the meeting the draft received, which covered some of the above points, and made provision for a reasonable hand-over period, and training of the new RFO. This Agreement was to be circulated around all Members of the Committee so that it could be discussed at Full Council.

Councillor Bradshaw was concerned at the Parish Council using 'Dropbox' as one of its Cloud storage places, as he understood that this was based in the USA and, therefore, did not conform with the new Data Protection Regulations. The Clerk was asked to verify this with the Parish Council's IT Support contractor. *Subsequent to the meeting the IT Support contractor confirmed it was USA based.*

The 'Money Manager Accountancy software would be needed to be able to access accountancy records dating from 2000-2001, the software package licence now being used bought and paid for by the RFO as his own personal accounts package.

A computer belonging to the Parish Council being due to be handed back by the Clerk to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee on her termination of employment on 15 March 2018. The meeting agreed that this was an old computer, but the RFO pointed out that all Parish Council data was cloud storage based, on either 'Dropbox' or 'One-Drive', and the computer had Microsoft 365 and could access all the data.

Councillor Bradshaw suggested to the meeting that an external drive on which to back-up any data being transferred in connection with The Neighbourhood Plan or Financial information, should be purchased, rather than relying on 'Memory Sticks'.

FIN.17.03.18 PHOTOCOPIER REVIEW:

The Clerk and RFO had met with representatives from Principal regarding the provision of a new photocopier at the Parish Office.

The RFO stated that the new Kyocera TA2552ci machine was comparable with the existing Canon machine, except for an onboard stapling unit. The Clerk was satisfied that the new machine would fulfil the requirements of the Parish Council and could be operated through existing router to the Parish Council's computer equipment.

The Canon, when taken on, was a second-hand machine, whereas, the Kyocera is a brand-new machine. The leasing costs of the machine, together with the stapler unit, would be £1243.20 (plus VAT) per annum, as opposed to the existing machine of £720.00 (plus VAT) per annum. The photocopier charges on the new machine are, however, approx. 50% of that under the existing agreement.

The RFO had prepared a comparison of costs on the existing machine to the new Kyocera machine over the period 24 September 2017 to 24 December 2017, which showed a slight increase of £22.58. The meeting noted that during this period there was a high usage due to the production and finalisation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The RFO reported that leasing Agreements etc., would be received from Principal in due course, and that the new Kyocera machine was due to be installed during the second week of April 2018.

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FIN.18.03.18 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting of the F&GP Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, 03 April 2018, commencing at 7.30pm. Venue: The meeting room in the Herstmonceux Village Information centre.

FIN.19.03.18 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING:

No items identified.

FIN.20.03.18 CLOSE OF MEETING:

There being no other business, the Chairman, Councillor Bradshaw thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 21.22 pm

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **CiLCA QUALIFICATION:** Proposed that it be **RECOMMENDED to FULL COUNCIL** that the required Registration Fees and Course fees, together with any out of pocket expenses for the Parish Clerk to continue with the CiLCA qualification be authorised. Proposed: Councillor Stewart; Seconded; Councillor Mrs Angear; All in Favour.

2. **RECREATION GROUND ACCESS ROAD:** The meeting **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL** that Mr Coffey be advised that he should seek any professional help as required in the preparation of any pre-construction reports, that the requirement for such reports and engagement of Professionals to undertake these be reported to the Parish Council, and the engagement for all such reports and works on the project be issued direct from the Parish Council. That the overall time for the Access Road project be set for three years with the intention of its completion by 31 March 2021.

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

3. **LIME CROSS SPORTS GROUND:** The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that the transfer of land be noted and added to the Parish Council's Assets Register, and that authorisation for a Works Order now be issued for the erection of the stock proof fencing, and payment of any Land Registry Fees be authorised. Proposed; Councillor Stewart; Seconded; Councillor Bradshaw; All in Favour.

4. **GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR):** The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that a meeting of the Communications Committee be convened and that a representative from the IT firm be invited to speak at the Committee meeting.

Proposed; Councillor Stewart; Seconded; Councillor Bradshaw; All in Favour.

5. **END OF YEAR RESERVES – LIME CROSS SPORTS GROUND:** The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that £3,000 for the renewal of planning application/permission and associated reports, be authorised under **VIREMENT** procedures from the provision of stock proof fencing at Lime Cross (£1,000) and from the provision of any Legal Fees arising from the Sports Ground development (£2,000).

Proposed; Councillor Bradshaw; Seconded; Councillor Stewart; All in Favour.

6. **PUBLIC CONVENIENCES:** The meeting **RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL** that once scrutinised by Councillor Stewart, and that a suitable Letter of Intent and Schedule of Photographs are received, the Licence be accepted and signed on behalf of the Parish Council.

Proposed; Councillor Stewart; Seconded; Councillor Bradshaw; All in Favour.