

## LANCING PARISH COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Wednesday 8 May 2019 at 7.30pm

**CLLrs Present:-** Geoff Patmore (Chair); Carol Albury, Clive Burghard, Robin Monk, Emma Purnell and Jean Turner.

**Officer:-** Helen Plant, Clerk.

**52. Apologies**

Apologies had been received, and with the reason outlined, were accepted from CLLrs Eveleigh and Scotting.

**53. Declaration of Substitute Members**

None.

**54. Declarations of Interest**

None.

**55. Public Forum/Questions**

None.

**56. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 13 March 2019**

**Resolved** – That the Minutes of the previous meeting be approved.

**57. Accounts for payment**

**57.1 March Expenditure**

Committee **RESOLVED** that the following amounts be paid:-

- i. March Current A/C expenditure in the sum of £41,697.76
- ii. March Clerks Payment A/C expenditure in the sum of £5.50

**57.2 April Expenditure**

Committee **RESOLVED** that the following amounts be paid:-

- i. April Current A/C expenditure in the sum of £36,398.74
- ii. April Clerks Payment A/C expenditure in the sum of £5.50

**58. Approval of Cash Balances & Investments**

It was **RESOLVED** that the cash balances and investments of the Council totalling £759,001.20 as at the 30 April 2019 was a true record.

**59. Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading**

The Clerk advised that the Insurance budgetary heading would be overspent due to a larger than expected increase in the annual premium following the addition of new assets and that that the Parish hall electricity costs were being questioned as the bills had not reduced as anticipated following the installation of the LED lighting.

**Resolved** – That the information be noted.

## **60. Clerk's Report**

### **60.1 Annual Internal Audit 2018/19**

Members were advised that the Council's Internal Auditor, Mulberry & Co, had carried out the annual internal audit on 18 April 2019, in anticipation of the Council's Annual Audit Report 2018/19 being submitted to the external auditor, Moore Stephens, once approved by full Council. The subsequent report had been previously circulated to Members.

It was noted that the Auditor had made some recommendations, including reviewing the level of General Reserves (Minute 60.4 refers) and amending Financial Regulations (Minute 60.5 refers).

**Resolved** – That the information be noted.

### **60.2 Annual Audit Report 2018/19**

Submitted - the Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statements. While both documents had to be approved by the Council, timings this year allowed for this Committee to review both documents prior to their submission to full Council.

It was noted that the Council's Accounts software package aided the production of the documents, as well as general information held on file and updated throughout the year, such as the Asset Register and as collated by the Finance Manager.

There were timescales that the Annual Audit Report had to adhere to in accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 Sections 26 and 27 and The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234). The Notice of Public Rights and Publication of Unaudited Accounting Statements must be advertised to the public by 23 May 2019, and once both documents had been approved by full Council, the relevant forms had to be signed off by the Chairman, Responsible Financial Officer and Clerk and then submitted to the External Auditor, Moore Stephens, by 28 June 2019.

#### **(a) Annual Governance Statement for 2018/19**

The Internal Auditor's report is attached to aid Members when considering approval of the Annual Governance Statement.

**Resolved** – That it be recommended to full Council that the Annual Governance Statement 2018/19 be approved.

#### **(b) Accounting Statements for 2018/19**

The Statements included the Statement of Accounting Policies, Notes to the Accounts, Annual Return and supporting papers and Income & Expenditure.

**Resolved** – That it be recommended to full Council that the Accounting Statements for 2018/19 be approved.

### **60.3 Bank Reconciliations**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.2, it was confirmed that the Chairman of this Committee, Cllr Patmore, had verified the bank reconciliations to the end of March 2019.

**Resolved** – That the information be noted.

#### 60.4 Acknowledgement of surplus General Reserves

Following the Council's 2018/19 end-of-year accounts audit, the Internal Auditor had highlighted that the Council's level of General Reserves was a little high and the Council should consider further earmarking.

It was noted that the Council's agreed level of reserves was £60k (Council Minutes 65.2(f)/Jan/18 and 80.2b/Jan/419 refer), albeit the Internal Auditor considered this level should be slightly higher, but certainly not reduced by any less.

Notwithstanding, the balance of General Reserves at the end of the 2018/19 financial year was £224,236, representing a £164k surplus.

It was acknowledged that the Council had a number of ongoing and outstanding projects, for which the full costs for some were still being explored, including the Beach Green Lighting, solar panels and electric car charging points for the Parish Hall and car park.

Members were therefore not being asked to make specific decisions in respect of spending surplus general reserves at this time, but to merely acknowledge the situation and to recognise that the matter would need addressing before the end of the 2019/20 financial year to satisfy the Internal Auditor.

**Resolved** – (a) That the situation in respect of the high level of general reserves be acknowledged and to agree that the Committee will address the matter before the end of the 2019/20 financial year, with onward recommendations to full Council, to satisfy the Internal Auditor.

(b) That a more detailed explanation in respect of the need to retain a specific level of general reserves be provided at the next Committee meeting.

#### 60.5 Review of Council Policies and Procedures

A review of the Council's Policies and Procedures remained ongoing. The submitted policies had been updated, in line with models, and had been submitted for members' information and comments if considered necessary: -

- i. Data Protection Policy (*updated*)
- ii. Training & Development Policy (*updated*)
- iii. Financial Regulations (*updated in accordance with Internal Auditor's recommendations*)
- iv. Communication, Social Media, Email and Internet Policy (*updated*)

**Resolved** – That the policies, as submitted, be approved, with Financial Regulations now being submitted to full Council with the recommendation of approval.

#### 60.6 Renewal of Grounds Maintenance Vehicle

Members' attention was drawn to the fact that the older of the two grounds maintenance vehicles, the Daihatsu HI jet, was unlikely to pass its MOT, due in August 2019, with repairs anticipated to cost more than the value of the vehicle. Furthermore, it was also stressed that the other vehicle, the Citroen Berlingo, was also showing signs of wear and tear.

With that in mind, permission was sought for the Clerk to acquire a replacement vehicle, using the specific earmarked funds for the purpose and to 'scrap' the existing vehicles.

**Resolved** – That the Clerk be authorised to source replacement grounds maintenance vehicles and for the existing vehicles to be disposed of accordingly.

#### **60.7 Refill Lancing (water refill campaign)**

Pursuant to Committee Minute 51.6/Mar/19 in respect of the Parish Hall becoming a refill station, it was reported that Refill Lancing was proving popular with many local shops and businesses also joining the scheme.

It was noted that when the schemes were launched at Worthing and Shoreham, Refill, in conjunction with supporting partners, had held an official launch event. It was therefore suggested that this Council showed its continued support for the Refill campaign by allowing free use of the Jubilee Hall for an official launch event for Lancing.

**Resolved** – That free use of the Jubilee Hall be given for the official launch event for Refill Lancing.

#### **60.8 Installation of Solar Panels to the Parish Hall**

It was reported that investigations into solar panels being installed to the Parish Hall had been ongoing for some time. The outcome of a grant funding application to Rampion had been awaited prior to any direct progress being made, but the response received last week disappointingly advised that it was unsuccessful. However, this was only because the Council had already received a grant award during 2018/19 (Monks Rec Improvement Project), but the Solar Panel grant application had been subsequently deferred until the next round, the closing date being 13 September 2019, but could be withdrawn if considered necessary.

While difficulties had been experienced in finding a solar panel company prepared to provide a quote, headway had been recently made. Quotes received, which varied considerably, were as follows:-

Company	System size	Price	Payback term
Empower Energy Ltd	4.2 kWp	£ 5,500	7 years
The Little Green Energy Company	10.45 kWp	£11,400	7 years
Sunstore	15.39 kWp	£11,600	6 years
Portsmouth City Council <i>(as recommended by Adur District Council)</i>	12 kWp	£18,000	9 years

All the companies had been provided the same information in respect of the Parish Hall's electricity usage to establish the required system size, but as Export Payments and Feed In Tariffs had now been abolished, it was suggested that production should now be balanced against consumption. However, a small excess in production could be used to power any electric car charging points that might be installed and to also feed the Council flat.

To ensure the best performance from the solar panels, it was recommended that they were installed on the south facing tiled pitched roof of the flat and also that higher costs were experienced when panels were installed on felt roofs, e.g. the Jubilee Hall roof, as additional works were required to waterproof penetrative fixings.

Members were reminded that there was no budget set aside for a solar panel project, but given item at 60.4 above, this could be considered a suitable project for the use of general reserves, but it will need to be recommended to full Council for final approval.

**Resolved** – That further investigations be made in respect of Empower Energy Ltd's submission with a view to a full technical survey of the Parish Hall and associated electricity usage being carried out to provide a final quotation.

#### **60.9 Considerations of Electric Car Charging Points for Parish Hall car park**

Pursuant to Cllr Clark's suggestion at the last Council meeting that the feasibility of electric charging points for cars at the Parish Hall car park being installed being looked into, it was reported that initial investigations into the costs had been carried out with E.ON and Empower Energy Ltd providing proposals.

**E.ON** – three options were available, i.e. LPC to own the hardware, E.ON to own the hardware or E.ON to part fund the hardware. However, the minimum contribution expected from the Council was £6,400 for the part fund option for one charging point.

Charging costs also varied depending on which option was taken, as well additional annual maintenance and servicing costs.

**Empower Energy Ltd** – £3,600 to supply and install 2 charging stations. This system would allow the Council to own the hardware, set its own pricing, restrict access and monitor energy usage. It appeared to be an easy to understand system but required the user to utilise an App to pay for the charging cost.

Again, Members were reminded that there was no budget set aside for this project, but given item at 60.4 above, this could be considered a suitable project for the use of general reserves as a joint project with the solar panel scheme, but it would need to be recommended to full Council for final approval.

**Resolved** – That further investigations be made in respect of Empower Energy Ltd's submission with a view to a full technical survey for the installation of electric car charging points at the Parish hall car park being carried out to provide a final quotation.

#### **60.10 Use of a specific Hall booking system**

Members were advised that the Parish office currently used Microsoft Outlook as the hall booking system, which was not designed for the purpose or ideal as mistakes could be easily made.

It was reported that the specifically designed booking system for community building's called Avalon is currently being trialled by the office. This had been recommended by other West Sussex local councils. This system provided significant features, such as the printing of booking confirmations, production of various reports and avoidance of rooms being double booked, but the biggest benefit was the integrated invoicing system. It was considered that the office would become more efficient in respect of room bookings overall.

The software licence was a one-off cost of £475 with the annual support service being £55, which were considerably lesser amounts than other similar systems. It was noted that there were sufficient funds in the Administration budget to cover the cost of the system.

**Resolved** – That approval be given for the use of the Avalon hall booking system.

#### **60.11 Damp in the Parish Hall corridor**

Members were advised that damp along the main corridor of the Parish Hall had appeared. It was initially suspected that this was an issue with drains that were known to run under the central corridor, but following an initial investigation by Dyno Drains team, this had been discounted and was more likely to be a leak with either the general water pipes or the heating system that run similarly. A breach in the damp proof course could also be attributable.

It was reported that a further investigation was due to be carried out by the Dyno Plumbing team, but Members' were warned that any repair work would involve the concrete along the main corridor being excavated to repair the affected pipe or pipes. Endeavours would be made for the work to be carried out on a weekend to avoid as much disruption to the Parish Hall as possible.

It was not known how much the works were likely to cost until the exact cause of the problem was identified, but enquiries would be made to establish whether the Council's insurance policy would cover the works.

**Resolved** – That the information be noted.

#### **60.12 Future of the Parish Hall incorporating affordable housing for local people**

It was stressed to Members that as the Parish Hall buildings were aged between 40 to over 100 years old and problems were starting to show in certain areas, such as the problem highlighted at 60.11 above. The building was by no means in extremis, but any project that required a major overhaul was likely to take some time to fulfil, so any potential opportunity should be given serious consideration.

It was noted that previous options to find an appropriate way with a suitable developer to rebuild the Parish Hall and incorporate affordable housing to the first, and possibly second floor, and with no or little cost to the Council, had been investigated but without success.

However, a new scheme had come to light in the form of the Sussex Community Housing Hub, overseen by Action in Rural Sussex. The Hub had been established to provide essential support for urban and rural communities across Sussex wishing to pursue successful community led housing projects. It aimed to increase the supply of community led housing, primarily affordable homes, to meet local needs. This was achieved through advice, support and guidance. Grant funding was also available for such projects.

It was reported that a project example was taking place in Angmering. Angmering Parish Council conceived the idea to set up the Angmering Community Land Trust, a registered Community Benefit Society and independent from the Parish Council but still led by a board of directors who were all volunteers. The first development project, 12 dwellings of 1, 2, and 3 bedroomed flats and houses, was scheduled for completion in late 2019 and would be offered to local people to rent at least 20-30% cheaper than on the open market.

Community led housing in the form of CLT's hold their assets in perpetuity through a legal 'asset lock'. This ensured that assets could only be sold or developed in a manner which benefits the local community. If a home was therefore sold, the cash realised was protected by the 'asset lock' so it could be re-invested into something else that the trust's members believed would benefit the local community.

However, the main perceived difficulty was the ability to attract a sufficient number of volunteers to form a CLT board of directors, but it was hoped that a project aimed at benefiting local people's housing needs would be an enough attraction.

Members' views were requested as to whether this was considered an interesting opportunity worthy of further investigation.

**Resolved** – That arrangements be made for a representative from Sussex Community Housing Hub to provide a presentation on community led housing at a future Committee meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm.

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