

## LANCING PARISH COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Wednesday 20 September 2017 at 7.00pm

**Cllrs Present:-** Geoff Patmore (Chair); Carol Albury, Douglas Bradley, Clive Burghard, Lee Cowen and Gina Scotting.

**Ex-officio:-** Cllr Mick Clark (from Minute 29).

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

**Public:-** One member of the public; Cllrs Monk and Purnell.

#### 21. Apologies

Apologies were received, and with the reason outlined, were accepted from Cllrs Gloria Eveleigh and Jean Turner.

#### 22. Declaration of Substitute Members

None.

#### 23. Declarations of Interest

None.

#### 24. Public Forum/Questions

None.

#### 25. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 19 July 2017

**Resolved** – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2017 be approved.

#### 26. Accounts for payment

##### 26.1 July's Expenditure

Committee **RESOLVED** that amounts in the sum of:-

- i. July's Current A/C expenditure in the sum of £65,450.13
- ii. July's Clerks Payment A/C expenditure in the sum of £12,158.32

##### 26.2 August's Expenditure

Committee **RESOLVED** that amounts in the sum of:-

- i. August's Current A/C expenditure in the sum of £26,851.58
- ii. August's Clerks Payment A/C expenditure in the sum of £12,292.88

#### 27. Approval of Cash Balances & Investments

It was **RESOLVED** that the cash balances and investments of the Council totalling **£393,853.86** as at the 31 August 2017 was a true record.

#### 28. Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading

The information included in the report was noted.

#### 29. Clerk's Report

##### 29.1 Review of Council Policies and Procedures

Members were reminded that a review was currently being carried out on some of the Council's Policies and Procedures as a matter of course, to be brought in line with current legislation or have been newly created and three documents were submitted.

It was confirmed that investigations had been made into 'carers leave' (Minute 20.2/Jul/17 refers). Acas advised that employees who had the responsibility of caring for children, elderly relatives or dependants, an employee could apply for the right to request flexible working and were entitled to time off for dependants to deal with unforeseen circumstances. The previously considered Employee Absence Policy included those rights.

**Resolved** – (a) That the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme and Employee Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures, as submitted, be approved.

(b) That the rights of carers be acknowledged as being included in the existing Employee Absence Policy.

## 29.2 Grant Aid

Members were reminded that a budget of £5k was earmarked for grant aid purposes. Applicants who received grant aid would be invited to the Autumn Village Forum to be presented with their cheques.

It was noted that one application was from a business. However, the Grant Aid Policy stated that applications would only be accepted from organisations. It was therefore recommended that that application be rejected and that the Policy be amended to make it clearer that applications would only be accepted from charitable, voluntary and/or non-profit making organisations.

Ms Katie Wastell, from Lancing and Sompting Concert Band, who was present at the meeting, was invited to expand on that organisations request.

Details of the applications received had been circulated prior to the meeting and the Committee determined allocations as follows:-

1. Victim Support - To provide comprehensive training courses to volunteers

**Resolved** – That no donation be made to Victim Support.

2. Electric Storm Youth - To help cover the costs of the new office space for the Senior Youth Worker.

**Resolved** – That no donation be made to Electric Storm Youth.

3. St Barnabas - Hospice Outreach Project outings.

**Resolved** – That no donation be made to St Barnabas.

4. West Sussex Mediation Service - To support the provision of mediation services to Lancing residents suffering conflicts in their lives.

**Resolved** – That no donation be made to West Sussex Mediation Service.

5. Twilight Sussex Mascots - To hold activity fun days in the Parish Hall for the children of Lancing (*it was noted that this was an entertainment business, not an organisation.*)

**Resolved** – That no donation be made to Twilight Sussex Mascots.

6. Lancing Football Club - To provide equipment to all levels of the Club's teams.

**Resolved** – That a donation of £1,000 be made to Lancing Football Club.

7. Kent Surrey Sussex Air Ambulance - Ongoing running costs.

**Resolved** – That a donation of £250 be made to Kent Surrey Sussex Air Ambulance.

8. Lancing & Sompting Concert Band - To purchase 50 4-ringbinders to store the music.

**Resolved** – That a donation of £150 be made to Lancing & Sompting Concert Band.

9. Lancing Flower Club - For the discounted fee for the move from the Council Chamber to the South Hall to continue (*it was noted this was agreed during the 2016/17 Grant Aid process.*)

**Resolved** – That the discounted fee for the move from the Council Chamber to the South Hall continue for one more year.

10. The Globe Primary School - To refurbish the school's outdoor swimming pool.

**Resolved** – That a donation of £3,600 be made to The Globe Primary School.

(b) That the Grant Aid Policy be amended to state that applications will only be accepted from charitable, voluntary and/or non-profit making organisations.

### **29.3 Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA)**

It was confirmed that the Clerk and Assistant Clerk had successfully passed this nationally recognised qualification and which was a condition of the appointment of both posts.

As stated in the Clerk and Assistant Clerk's contracts, this qualification entitled both roles to an additional salary scale point. Unfortunately, however, this increase had not been accounted for within the 2017/18 budget, and would therefore create an overspend of £1,219 on the Admin wages budget and £1,871 on the Pension budget.

**Resolved** – (a) That the information be noted.

(b) That the Clerk and Assistant Clerk be congratulated on their achievement of CiLCA.

### **29.4 Draft Budget 2018/19 and setting the precept**

The Committee was reminded that it would need to agree the final budget and level of precept for 2018/19 at its meeting on 22 November for resolution by Full Council on 10 January 2018. Extraordinary meetings would be called if this timeframe could not be fulfilled.

Members were asked to consider whether there were any potential schemes that would require scoping out for inclusion in the Council's overall 2018/19 budgetary considerations, along with those as identified by the Amenities and Environment Committee who considered the matter at its meeting on 13 September 2017.

**Resolved** – (a) That the costs of the following identified projects and expenditure be included in the 2018/19 budgetary considerations.

- 1. Council owned Flat** – £1,000 to replace shower cubicle with a bath (retaining electric shower);
- 2. Replacement Stage Steps** – Quotes currently being sought;

3. **Replacement Access Tower** – £1,400;
4. **Garden Competition** - £100 to cover general expenses and a request that the Jubilee Hall hiring fee is waived for the Garden Competition presentation event;
5. **Beach Green Play Area replacement fencing** - quotes currently being sought;
6. **Grounds maintenance equipment, including new heavy duty self-propelled hand lawn mower, football pitch line marker, generator and demolition-hammer** - £2,500;
7. **Widewater** – new item – to cover incidental costs specific to Widewater - £500; and
8. **Monks Rec Improvement Project** - £20,000.

(b) That a proposed increase in the Annual Councillor Allowance and an increase in Chairs Allowance be declined.

### 29.5 Council owned flat at 100 South Street

It was reported that the current tenancy at the above property was due to expire on 14 November 2017. The Letting Agent had asked whether the Council wished to offer a further 12 month Assured Shorthold Tenancy, subject to the current tenant agreeing terms, and whether an increase in rent was desired.

**Resolved** – (a) That a further 12 month assured shorthold tenancy be offered.

(b) That the rent be increased from £775 to £795 per calendar month.

### 29.6 Hall Hire Payment Arrangements

#### i. Displaced South Hall Regular Hirers

Further to the South Hall being let out for exclusive use by a Montessori Nursery, it was confirmed that Ofsted had carried out their inspection on 14 September and the Nursery had passed meeting all the necessary requirements. All but one of the regular South Hall hirers had now located to other rooms within the Parish Halls, mainly the Jubilee Hall. However, what had not been approved was for those regular hirers to continue paying the South Hall session rate for a specified period in lieu of the inconvenience of being displaced.

**Resolved** – That the regular South Hall hirers who have been displaced to the Jubilee Hall following the exclusive use by the Montessori Nursery, be given a one-year period of paying the South Hall session rate and for the situation to be reviewed towards the end of that period.

#### ii. To confirm free of charge hall hirers

It was confirmed that the use of the Council Chamber for all Council and Committees meetings etc. were not charged to the Council. However, what was not clear was the identity of the groups who could be given the use of any Parish Hall rooms free of charge.

It was reported that there were currently three groups who did not have funds of their own and therefore did not pay for the use of a room, two of which the Council had representatives on; Keep Lancing Safe and Lancing Vision Group. The third group was the Community Panel, originally set up by the Police, but was now run as an extension of Neighbourhood Watch.

Furthermore, the Cinema Working Group had requested the hall free of charge for the remainder of 2017/18 to assist with the Group's finances until other options of how best to run the Cinema were explored and the Garden Competition Working Group had requested that the hall hire fee be waived for the presentation event. Cllr Monk added that the cinema had been a learning curve but all those involved were endeavouring to make it work.

As the Council aimed to retain its improved business acumen, a clear direction on this matter was sought.

**Resolved** – (a) That groups, such as Keep Lancing Safe, Lancing Vision Group and the Community Panel be authorised to use rooms within the Parish Hall free of charge.

(b) That the Cinema Working Group be granted the use of the Jubilee Hall free of charge for the remainder of 2017/18 and the Garden Competition Working Group be granted the use of the Jubilee Hall free of charge for the presentation event.

**30. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

**31. Recommendation from the Value for Money Sub-committee – Review of Parish Council’s Licence Agreements**

The VfM Sub-committee met on 23 August to review the Council’s four License Agreements for the provision of services and amenities to ensure best value was being obtained, how the tenders should be managed and where best to advertise the tenders for onward recommendation. The confidential Minutes of that meeting, which laid out the Sub-committee’s recommendations were attached for Members’ information. It was noted that those minutes would be made available to the public once the tender process had been completed.

Discussion ensued in respect of the kiosk tender and whether a different approach to the usual 3-year tender should be tried, e.g. a ten-year lease with the full amount of the rental paid upfront to use as a capital sum. However, as this would have an effect on the Council’s annual income potentially leading to an increase in the precept, and that it didn’t allow for an annual incremental rise in the rent, this approach was considered unwieldy.

**Resolved** – That the recommendations of the Value for Money Sub-committee be agreed and be subsequently submitted to full Council for final approval.

**32. Consideration of an Independent Financial Review**

A member suggested that the Council should consider having an independent financial review to eliminate any anomalies from previous years administration as specific expenditure amounts were perceived to have been overpaid. This was interpreted by other members as a request for a forensic audit, which was acknowledged to be a costly exercise and for what purpose. The member in question implied that it would be to thoroughly scrutinise the use of public money and to take action if necessary. However, most other members considered that this was unjustified and it was therefore agreed that an initial internal check should be made on two specific matters to rule this action out.

**Resolved** – That the Clerk carries out an internal check on two specific items of expenditure from previous years accounts to confirm that the items were judged to have been paid at the market value of the time and report the findings back to the next Committee meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.51pm.

Signed Chairman

Date