

LANCING PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Wednesday 21 March 2018 at 7.00pm

CLLrs Present:- Geoff Patmore (Chair); Douglas Bradley (from Minute 63.1), Clive Burghard, Lee Cowen (from Minute 60) and Gina Scotting.

Ex-officio:- Cllr Mick Clark.

Officer:- Helen Plant, Clerk

Public:- None.

55. Apologies

Apologies were received, and with the reasons outlined, were accepted from Cllrs Carol Albury and Jean Turner.

56. Declaration of Substitute Members

None.

57. Declarations of Interest

None.

58. Public Forum/Questions

None.

59. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 24 January 2018

Resolved – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2018 be approved.

60. Accounts for payment

60.1 January's Expenditure

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

- i. January's Current A/C expenditure in the sum of £29,182.32
- ii. January's Clerks Payment A/C expenditure in the sum of £11,566.59

60.2 February's Expenditure

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

- i. February's Current A/C expenditure in the sum of £27,127.09
- ii. February's Clerks Payment A/C expenditure in the sum of £12,415.34

61. Cash Balances & Investments

61.1 Approval of Cash Balances & Investments

It was **RESOLVED** that the cash balances and investments of the Council totalling **£233,159.14** as at 28 February 2018 was a true record.

61.2 Investment Options

Details of investment interest rate investigations were reported at the meeting. The Committee acknowledged that current saving rates all round were poor and that it was prudent to save funds in a known and secure financial institution. However, a question was asked as to whether the Parish Council could invest in land and property.

Resolved – (a) That the Council’s surplus funds remain invested with Adur District Council’s savings schemes.

(b) That investigations be made as to whether the Parish Council is allowed to invest in land or property.

62. Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading

Resolved – That the information included in the report be noted.

63. Clerk’s Report

63.1 Review of Council Policies and Procedures

Members were reminded that a review was currently being carried out on the Council’s Policies and Procedures as a matter of course, to be brought in line with current legislation or had been newly created. Three documents were submitted for consideration, two of which were re-submitted.

Pursuant to 51.1(c)/Jan/18, it was confirmed that further investigations had been made in respect of the following:-

- Bullying and Harassment Policy – reference had now been made to psychological abuse. This policy was aimed at employees only. However, it was confirmed that if a councillor was being bullied by an employee, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Clerk or Chair of the Council for the matter to be considered by the HR Sub-committee or direct to the Council.
- Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy - definitions of services and the term ‘vulnerable adults’ had been changed to ‘Adults at Risk and was clarified in the policy. In respect of hirers being requested to provide details of their own safeguarding policies and DBS checks, this was considered unnecessary, unfeasible and was likely to put off hirers. The terms and conditions of hall hire would address this concern.

Resolved – That the Bullying and Harassment Policy, Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy and Recruitment Policy, as submitted, be approved.

63.2 Heritage Corner

It was reported that a suggestion from Lancing & Sompting Pastfinders had been received for the next heritage corner display – the story of the old Trevett Sweet Shop, on South Street. The display consisted of photographs and a write-up of the story.

Resolved – That the Trevett Sweet Shop story be approved for the next Heritage Corner display.

63.3 Council buildings Gas and Electricity Usage and Tariffs

Pursuant to Committee Minute 49.2/Jan/18, a verbal report outlining the gas and electricity usage for all of the Parish Council's buildings was provided at the meeting. It was noted that all public buildings now had to have a Display Energy Certificate to show how much energy was being used to operate the building in accordance with the Energy Performance of Buildings (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 as amended. An inspection had recently been carried out to comply with those regulations and the Parish Hall had been given a B rate, which was more efficient than expected. The Energy Assessor had provided various recommendations as to how short/medium/long term paybacks could be achieved and investigations would be made into implementing the high impact recommendations. The Assessor also considered that the current tariffs were satisfactory.

Resolved – That the information provided by the Energy Assessor be accepted.

63.4 Precept Error by Adur District Council

Subsequent to the recent issue of Adur District Council's Council Tax bills and the notification that Lancing Parish Council's precept had increased by 11.7% instead of the agreed 6.62%, Members were provided with the following explanation provided by ADC:-

"There was a clerical error at the time of billing 2017/18 Lancing parish precept. Instead of billing £302,200 to taxpayers of Lancing, the amount billed was £282,170 (the precept for 2016/17). This meant that the taxpayers of Lancing parish did not pay the increase of £20,000 for 2017/18. However, the Parish was paid £302,200 as set by the Parish Council and ADC observed the costs.

This error was corrected while preparing comparative figures for 2018/19 and hence the comparison shows an increase of 11.72% which is an increase for 2 years from 2016/17 to 2018/19."

The Clerk reported that a reply was made requesting an apology due to the enormous amount of public anger received against Lancing Parish Council over the unexpected increase and a request had been made for the reasoning behind the error to be provided to residents. Whilst the Chief Financial Officer had responded to the Clerk with an apology, no comment had been made as to whether the issue would be redressed with Lancing Residents.

It was noted that the Clerk intended to write a further response requesting a public apology to Lancing residents via a press release and an update would be provided at the next meeting.

Whilst Members acknowledged that no further action on the matter could be determined at this point by the Committee as the item was reported at the meeting itself, Members expressed their dismay and outrage on the matter and hoped that ADC would resolve the matter accordingly.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.