

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & COMMUNITY COMMITTEE HELD ON  
TUESDAY 7<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2014 AT 7.30 P.M**

**PRESENT:** Cllr Lloyd- Chairman  
Cllrs Bowell, Rogers, Toomey, Toms, and Ness-Collins  
Cllr Muncey S.O 3(c)  
2 members of the public were present  
No members of the press  
The Clerk was in attendance.

**1 APOLOGIES**

**1.1** There were apologies for absence from Councillors Hoare and Alexander

**2. DECLARATIONS**

**2.1** There were declarations of personal interest from Councillor Rogers for Purple Bus.

**3. REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

There were no requests for dispensations.

**4. MINUTES**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Lloyd and **seconded** by Cllr Ness-Collins that the minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013 be adopted as a true record of the meeting. **This was Agreed.**

**5. MATTERS ARISING AND ACTIONS**

**5.1** Check Section 106 funding for water boiler. Ongoing.

**5.2** WW1 celebrations – no ideas have been forwarded to the clerk – to put to Full Council and to promote this at Showcase.

**5.3** Older People in Isolation – Cllr Rogers reported that she proposes to approach all participants at Showcase to ask them to make a commitment in terms of working towards recognising loneliness within their groups to think about, consider and facilitate Older People in Isolation and how they can get them together. Some older residents do not have a lot of knowledge of what goes on in Steyning and what it has to offer. Showcase leaflet to encourage people to come along and join up to groups of which there are over 90 operating in Steyning. To set up a working group from Full Council.

**5.4** Steyning Football club grant – ongoing.

- 5.5 4 year arrangement for maintenance of the clock. On contacting our usual contractor on this matter the deal is only eligible on payment of the 4 years maintenance costs up front. However, they have offered a 5% discount which they will hold for a period of 4 years.
- 5.6 The revised Financial Regulations have been circulated to councillors and are on the website.
- 5.7 Showcase leaflet – progressing.

## 6. NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN SCHEME REPORT/LAT REPORT

- 6.1 The Neighbourhood Wardens report was circulated to councillors and is attached to these minutes. December was a quiet month and it was good news that there were no major problems. Had monitoring meeting with other parishes and HDC and Wardens and this will happen quarterly. Any issues can be raised through this meeting. To ask Wardens to report on other work undertaken and visits made. To look at the style of reporting to be discussed at next monitoring meeting.
- There was no LAT meeting this month.

## 7. QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

- 7.1 A written question has been received as follows:
- “Of the hundreds of local authorities across the land, SPC is one of the very few which has chosen to make submissions to the Secretary of State opposing proposals to increase data transparency which are intended to make councils more accountable to their electorate. The council wishes to keep secret its public works contracts – including prices – and also the clerk’s salary.
1. by what process was the Clerk authorised to make this submission on behalf of the Council there appears to have been no discussion either in committee or in full council to authorise it?
  2. the Clerk’s submission says that publishing public works contracts and prices information ‘would be completely anti-competitive. One contract to one contractor tells a competitor exactly what the tendered price is and they are then in a position to undercut the price. Some might say this is exactly what we are trying to do, to reduce prices, but lower prices do not always produce the best standard of work and the whole process could backfire’.
- How so? A properly drawn up and enforced contract ensures the appropriate standard of the work. Why is it then not in the best interests of the Council and its taxpayers to facilitate the lowest price for the work under that contract”?
- *The clerk is the Proper Officer of the Council and the Responsible Finance Officer and is authorised to respond to correspondence and questions on behalf of the council in line with Council policy. The Council maintains an exemption under Section 43 of the Publication Scheme regarding disclosure of contract prices – Commercial Interests exemptions - and a similar question was answered by this committee at its meeting in July 2013. The answer given by the Clerk to the ICO questionnaire is in line with Council policy.*
  - *In accordance with Council Financial Regulation 11.1 (h) The Council is not obliged to accept the lowest or any tender. The Council will always, as far*

*as is reasonably practicable, obtain value for money and the best terms possible.*

- *There is no requirement for staff salaries to be made public below the threshold of £58,000 p.a.*

The meeting was suspended to allow questions from members of the public.

- Have there been any Working party meetings since 3.12.13 on skateboard facility.

Skateboard facility is not an item for this committee this is for Full Council. This was moved to Full Council a long time ago and we will let the questioner know when this became a Full Council issue.

- Wardens taking children to skateboarding facilities for free. When did this happen.

Not known. To take up with Wardens.

- Is the precept going up.

Yes, subject to agreement at this committee tonight and Full Council the proposed increase is 18.2%.

The meeting was reconvened.

## **8. INFORMATION ITEMS**

**8.1** Cllr Lloyd reported that he had, regrettably, been informed by the Clerk that it is her intention to retire in the coming year. In view of the fact that the recruitment process can be lengthy, and that a 2 month handover period is necessary Cllr Lloyd **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Rogers that it is delegated to him (Vice Chair), Cllr Howell (Chair) and the clerk to proceed with the recruitment process as soon as possible. This was **Agreed**.

**8.2** Butterfield Bank have informed us that the minimum account range for attracting interest has increased so our account no longer qualifies for interest. It was **proposed** by Cllr Lloyd, **seconded** by Cllr Ness-Collins to delegate the clerk to close the account and research alternative accounts and bring back to this committee. This was **Agreed**.

**8.3** Town Clock not chiming waiting for contractor repair. It was **proposed** by Cllr Lloyd, **seconded** by Cllr Toms to delegate the Clerk to progress the repair but if cost is more than normal call out to bring back to committee. This was **Agreed**.

## **9. STEYNING CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP**

Cllr Toms reported that he has 3 quotes for skylight. Went to 6/8 companies but only got 3 returned. Will discuss at next Steyning Centre meeting. Some minor breakages to doors, we will try and repair but may need replacement.

## **10. ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

**10.1** None for this meeting.

## **11. BUDGETS**

Final committee budgets have been circulated to councillors. Committee are asked to give approval to these budgets which will give an annual increase to the precept on an average Band D property of £13.33 p.a. or 0.25p per week. The annual precept sum to be £229,418 (including Council Tax Benefit grant of £8,902).

Cllr Lloyd stated that the budget included sums for possible election expenses and legal challenges. Other budgets have been kept as low as possible. Increases have been included for the new 3 year grass cutting and litter contracts and for part-time, fixed term increase in administrative support for the parish office.

- Cllr Muncey raised concern at the 18% rise when other authorities are cutting back. Steyning is the highest precept per resident in surrounding parishes. Would like committee to re-consider the £15k into reserves for elections and legal.

The £15k is not going into reserves it goes into revenue budget.

If it is not used because we do not get legal challenges or another call for an election then it would go into reserves at the end of the year.

Any legal challenge on the skateboard facility, for instance, would probably cost more than £15k and will necessitate reserves being used. When comparing with other parishes we must compare like with like, we fund or run a swimming pool, wardens, youth service, toilets and community centre. Others PC's do not have this, some make contributions but at a lesser amount.

- We do have money in reserves and feel we should use this now.

It is reasonable to raise the point. Councils are looking at services to look at making savings, or increase revenue in the form of charges, i.e. user pays. Steyning provides a lot of services and it is important to recognise that Parish Council precepts may well be capped next year. We need to be prudent and it is for the council to represent the residents and to make the decisions on precept.

- When we raised the precept for Youth service a survey went out.

This was for an entirely new service but it is for the council to represent the residents and to make the decisions on precept.

The annual costs for the Wardens, Youth Service, toilets and swimming pool are ongoing. What we are suggesting this year is a one off increase to be prudent.

Of the other comparable Parish Council's we are one of the smallest in terms of staff, but provide more services. We provide good value for money to the residents - because of the wardens and Youth Service we are considered one of the safest towns in Horsham District.

We should not deplete our reserves.

It is recognised to be a fairly large increase, but the Council has been hit with legal challenges this year and there is a threat from some residents of more to come should the skate-park go ahead. We have a responsibility to protect the Parish Council with a contingency.

WSCC are making savings as are HDC. Parish Councils will, increasingly, have to make decisions on things like devolved works or picking up other services when WSCC and HDC make savings. Do we take them on or let services go?

It was **proposed** by Cllr Lloyd, **seconded** by Cllr Rogers that the budgets and precept be agreed as above and recommended to Full Council for approval. This was **Agreed**.

## 12. REVIEW OF PROCEEDURES

Cllr Lloyd stated that revised Committee terms of reference have been circulated to councillors.

Cllr Lloyd **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Ness-Collins that these be agreed. This was **Agreed**.

Cllr Lloyd said that a small revision had been made to Standing Orders in respect of the delegations to the clerk. Cllr Lloyd **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Rogers to accept this revision. This was **Agreed**.

### **13. APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT AID**

**13.1** An application has been received from the Purple Bus and we now have a copy of their accounts. Although the Purple Bus has not visited Steyning in the last two years it is possible to make an application for it to do so. It was set up to provide outreach to remote rural areas. It can supplement the Youth provision and is a shared provision between HDC and Chichester District councils. It allows and facilitates Young people to congregate, and offers counselling and advice.

With our current youth provision is not seen as necessary for a visit to Steyning at this point. Cllr Lloyd **proposal seconded** Cllr Bowell, that we do not provide a grant this year. This was **Agreed**.

It was noted that this did not mean we could not apply for a visit if required in the future.

**13.2** An application has been received from the Steyning & District Visitor and Tourism group for a grant for their room hire costs to the end of this financial year in the sum of approx. £45. It was **proposed** by Cllr Lloyd **seconded** by Cllr Rogers to grant £45 subject to usage when other rooms are in use. This was **Agreed**.

**13.3** A request has been received from Steyning Bowling club for help with the cost of the repair to their fencing accidentally damaged by a vehicle. The estimated total cost of repair is £102. It was not possible to make an insurance claim for the sum involved as the excess on the policy is £250.

It was not considered an appropriate use of community grant funding.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Ness-Collins, **seconded** by Cllr Toms **not** to approve this grant. This was **Agreed**.

It was noted that the Police have a fund for small acts of criminal damage. The Bowls Club to be advised to contact Greg Charman, HDC for more information.

**13.4** 4Sight has asked for a grant for visually impaired people living in our area, audio book service. 4Sight attend 36 residents in the Steyning area.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Rogers, **seconded** by Cllr Ness-Collins to grant £150 as in previous years. This was **Agreed**.

### **14. REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

**14.1** Nothing for this meeting.

### **15. FINANCIAL REPORT AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

**15.1** There were petty cash payments of £5 postages and a frame for Millenium Certificate in November.

**15.2** The Income & Expenditure statements for November and December have been circulated to councillors. Salaries could go over budget as there has been some additional administrative support, but this will be covered by underspends elsewhere. Cllr Lloyd **proposed** agreement to the accounts for this period, **seconded** by Cllr Toomey. This was **Agreed**.

- 15.3** The contract documentation for the Grass and Litter contracts has been circulated to councillors for information. It is proposed to place an advert in the local press this week with a closing date for applications of 20<sup>th</sup> January. Once tenders for the contract have been received back they will be need to be opened and evaluated.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Lloyd, **seconded** by Cllr Rogers to delegate the chairs of Playing Fields and Highways, Cllrs. Bowell(Chair) & Lloyd(Vice-Chair) and the Clerk to proceed with the advert and tender process for these contracts and to report back to committee when done. This was **Agreed**.

**16. COUNCILLOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Cllr Lloyd reported that regrettably Cllr Hoare has made the decision to resign from the Parish Council. Although Cllr Hoare initially asked for a leave of absence his work commitments have necessitated resignation. The Notice of Vacancy will be posted tomorrow.

Cllr Lloyd proposed sincere thanks to Cllr Hoare for all his hard work and wished him well for the future. This was unanimously agreed by committee.

**17. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY**

There was nothing to add to the list this month.

**18. PRIDE OF PLACE**

This item is for all committees to consider older people in the community. Cllr Rogers proposed to put the work of Older People in Isolation under this item.

- 19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2014 at 7.30 pm.

**The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.04 p.m.**