



Local Government for Langton Green, Speldhurst, Ashurst and Old Groombridge

Minutes of a Finance Committee Meeting held in the Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground on Monday 18th February 2013 at 7.30pm

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllr Mrs Jeffreys (Chairman), Cllrs Mrs Podbury, Mrs Soyke, Hemming, Milner, Parker and Pendleton

OFFICERS PRESENT: C May – Clerk; M Flemington – Assistant Clerk

There was one member of the public present; Mr Ivan Goodsell, Chairman of the Speldhurst Recreation Committee (SRC)

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Owen (holiday)
2. **Declarations of Pecuniary or Other Significant Interests:** Cllr Mrs Jeffreys declared a significant interest in 10 Land Acquisition – she is a resident in The Boundary and 14b) she is on the advisory committee of CAB
3. **Declarations of Lobbying:** There were none.
4. **Minutes** of the meeting dated **17th September 2012**, copies having previously been forwarded to Members, were approved and signed as a correct record
5. **Public Open Session:** Mr Goodsell (IG) attended the meeting to update and inform the committee of the progress on the playground project. It was agreed that No.7 on the Agenda should be brought forward.
7. **Speldhurst Recreation Ground** – IG showed detailed drawings designed by Lappsett. The total cost is estimated to be £130,000 and will be built in two or three phases – the first costing about £45,000-50,000 which will have a central climbing tower. SRG has identified various funding organisations including Biffa and Veolia who both require match funding of 100% and 20% respectively. IG asked if the Parish Council would release funds towards match funding.
Responding to councillors' questions IG said that once funding was identified they would approach Maria Cook to help with the management of the project. IG said that fund raising events will be held and donations from the village would be sought. After much discussion Cllrs **AGREED** to recommend to Full Council that a maximum of £15,000 be released towards match funding to enable the initial phase of the project to go forward. IG will be informed of the decision after the March meeting and he will keep the Council informed of progress.

6. **Matters Arising and Correspondence:** Cllr Mrs Soyke asked if suitable safety equipment had been purchased with the new Stihl Kombi tool. Cllr Milner confirmed that it had been purchased and was being used.
8. **Financial Position as at February 2013** - The Clerk had previously circulated the Financial Position and this was duly noted by the Committee.
9. **2012-13 review of budget v expenditure** – the clerk reviewed the actual figures v projected year-end figures. He noted that despite some changes the overall saving of £8,000 will still be achieved. There was one anomaly which was the cost of the election held last May. The invoice of £2,500 from TWBC arrived after the budget had been set and consequently there is no money budgeted in the coming financial year should we have a contested election.
The clerk stressed that all councillors on the finance committee should understand the figures and should they have any questions they should not hesitate to ask for an explanation.
10. **Land Acquisition** – the clerk said that the land at The Boundary would involve a £2,000 annual maintenance cost. This was a worst case scenario as local maintenance work could be cheaper. Letters would go out to residents suggesting a possible rough cut which would mean considerably less maintenance cost. He suggested that his money will need to come from the contingency account and a virement will be made once the maintenance cost is known.
11. **Insurance** – the council has been insured with Aviva through Came & Company on a three year contract since 2010 (when they were able to reduce the premium by 20% from the previous insurers). During that time they have been excellent to deal with and have given quick and invaluable advice. This policy is now up for renewal and they have proposed a premium of £2,113.59 per annum on a three year agreement - a reduction from last year's premium which was £3,028.78. At a recent meeting they also proposed an additional policy – commercial loss recovery insurance (estimated at £150pa) which covers the cost of an expert to manage loss and re-build of a building due to a fire for example. They also said that next year our policy could run for fifteen months at no extra cost to move the renewal date away from the financial year end.
The committee unanimously **AGREED** to recommend to Full Council that this policy be renewed with Came & Co. with the additional policy.
12. **Christmas lights** – the clerk suggested that the problem be addressed early in the year and not later when options were time limited. The lights were in need of repair and the company that originally fitted them had suggested that they be replaced (original cost in the region of £2,000) and might need to be replaced every two – three years. The clerk suggested that the first course of action should be for an electrician to review them and report back. This was **AGREED** and he would use Treadwell Electricians.
13. **QR Codes** – the company managing the website has suggested for a one-off cost of £50 that we can use quick response codes on documents and posters. The matter was discussed and **AGREED**.
14. **Grant requests**
 - a) Speldhurst Primary School – a letter dated 28th January had been received requesting a grant towards an ICT project. The school has identified that the ICT server and computer suite is in need of replacement (25 desktop PC's). All schools have suffered budget cuts and the PTA will be making this the major fund raising effort for the next year and has set a target of £10,000. The grant request was for a contribution of up to £5,000.
The clerk said he was concerned about committing funds from the next financial year at such an early stage especially when councillors had said that the council's own assets need to take priority. There was much discussion on the merits of supporting such a cause and a proposal was made by Cllr

Pendleton to recommend to Full Council that £2,500 is granted and that the council re-examine its financial position in six months should the school still be in need of funds. This was **AGREED**.

- b) CAB – a letter dated 12th February had been received requesting a grant towards their annual running costs. There was much discussion on whether the grant should be £750 per budget or £1,000 to match that committed last year. It was **AGREED** by 4-2 with one abstention to grant £1,000.
- c) Speldhurst Fete Insurance – an email from Nick Burgess dated 6th February had been received informing the committee that he was taking over as Chairman of the fete committee and asking if the Parish Council would consider covering the cost of the insurance again in 2013. No figure was available so no decision could be made but the committee agreed that the request would be considered as in previous years. The clerk was requested to advise Mr Burgess to use Came & Company for a quote and that a decision would be made when that was received.
- d) St John's Church, Groombridge – an email from David Crundwell dated 5th February had been received asking for assistance towards the cost of maintaining the churchyard. It was **AGREED** to grant £500 but any further requests would need more detail.

15. Other matters arising from the minutes of 17th September 2012

There was nothing outstanding

16. Items for information – the clerk suggested that the CTSG could be used towards the election budget but that the decision can be taken later in the year.

The Chairman said she spoken to the Chairman of Withyham Parish Council who confirmed that they would consider making a grant to the Tanyard Sports Ground Association towards the pavilion project once the planning process was complete and more information received.

The assistant clerk asked whether the committee would prefer an expenditure request for a first aid box by email or at the next Full Council meeting. It was agreed this could be dealt with by email.

The clerk said that new information had come forward regarding the decision made at Full Council on 4th February 2013 (to deduct the cost of a marquee from the grant towards the insurance of LGRS).

Cllrs Mrs Jeffreys, Mrs Soyke, Mrs Podbury and Pendleton proposed a special resolution that in the light of the new information the decision of 4th February be rescinded and discussed again at the Full Council meeting on March 4th 2013. **The clerk will add this to the agenda.**

The meeting closed at 8.50pm

CHAIRMAN