



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

Minutes of a Finance Committee Meeting held in the Committee Room, Langton Green Village Hall on Monday 25th July 2011 at 7.30pm

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

OFFICER PRESENT: Chris May – Clerk

There were two members of the public present: Mr & Mrs Ponsford (left at 8.15pm)

- 1. Declarations of Interests:** Cllr Parker declared a Personal and Prejudicial interest in item 13 – he is a Trustee of the Langton Green Charitable Trust (LGCT)
- 2. Declarations of Lobbying:** There were none.
- 3. Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Owen (holiday)
- 4. Minutes** of the meeting dated **25th May 2011**, copies having previously been forwarded to Members, were approved and signed as a correct record.
- 5. Public Open Session:** Mrs Ponsford asked why the Parish Council had taken out a loan at 3.98% to pay for the Parish Office when it had adequate funds in the account to pay for it and why the Parish Council had not invested funds to obtain a better return.
Cllrs said that the monies in the account were for different projects, some of which may be called upon at short notice and therefore could not be invested on a longer term basis. It was accepted that a balance could have been invested earlier with hindsight but the Council had recently taken steps to invest the reserve in a temporary loan to LGCT and would look into investing the money upon maturity. It was acknowledged that there was a fundamental disagreement between the two parties.
- 6. Matters Arising and Correspondence:** There were two letters regarding financial matters; an email from Mr Ian Brooker requesting financial details for the year ending 2008, 2009 and 2010, the cost of the Parish Newsletter to print and distribute and whether there is a legislative limit on how much the Parish Council may raise the precept. The Clerk had part answered and would be supplying the additional information in due course; an email from the Speldhurst Primary School Headteacher enquiring if the Parish Council could re-claim part of the VAT back on the outdoor classroom project. It was agreed that this was not possible and the Clerk was asked to inform her accordingly.

7. **Financial Position as at 25th July 2011** - The Clerk had previously circulated the Financial Position and this was duly noted by the Committee. An additional payment had been made toward the Parish Office that day and new figures were made available.
8. **2011-12 review of budget vs expenditure** – Councillors reviewed the figures that had been previously circulated. Cllr Mrs Podbury said that the money allocated to Parish Vision should be redistributed between two projects - Broadband and shops. **This was agreed.** It was noted that Ashurst maintenance figure was likely to exceed budget and **the Clerk was asked to investigate why.** Cllr Parker enquired about the Speldhurst School outdoor playground figure that still had £3,500 outstanding and **the Clerk was asked to investigate.**
9. **Standing Orders – Financial Regulations** – there were a number of amendments and the **Clerk was asked to prepare a new document** for approval at the September Full Council meeting.
10. **Policy Statements** – Grant Awarding Guidelines. A document had been prepared and circulated to Councillors. A number of amendments had been proposed and these were discussed and agreed by Councillors. **The Clerk was asked to prepare a new document** for approval at the August, if possible, or September Full Council meeting
11. **Parish Office** – Councillors were advised that there was a variance between the actual cost of the office and the provisional quote on electrical installations, windows and telephone cables because the specification had been changed since the original plans had been drawn up. The difference was £3,557.00 and the committee **AGREED** to recommend approval to Full Council.
12. **Investment of Council Funds** – The Clerk advised the committee that the loan to LGCT would be maturing in September (before the September Finance meeting) and a decision would be necessary about where to re-invest the money and what amount. **The Clerk was asked to investigate and report.**
13. **Grant request from LGCT towards the final phase of the extension to the Village Hall** – A letter from the Chairman of the LGCT dated 12th July had been received requesting a grant of £6,500 towards the final phase of the building works. This phase would provide a unisex disabled toilet (DPWC) and a caretaker's office. Cllr Parker advised the committee that the Rural Society had also received a similar letter but he could not guarantee that they would make the funds available. He then left the room. Councillors discussed the merits and decided to **recommend approval** of the grant to Full Council because it will benefit the users of the office and be a general improvement for the rest of the community using the facilities. Cllr Parker rejoined the meeting
14. **Land outside the old Watson Hall – posts**
 - i. **AGREED** to finance the cost of eight wooden posts should Full Council approve the installation. There were adequate funds to pay for this improvement because of TWBC funding. It was also suggested that reflectors could be put on the posts.
 - ii. It was **AGREED** to purchase the two collapsible posts and store them pending future use. Tate Fencing had agreed to deduct the labour.
15. **KCC cuts to Highways budget** - The Clerk advised the committee that the budget cuts by KHS to the verges is affecting safety in some areas of the Parish, particularly at Ashurst on the exit from Claytons Lane and in Langton on Council land outside the old Watson Hall (looking north up Speldhurst Road). The matter was discussed and it was agreed to pay for one-off cuts to certain areas if it was ascertained that no KHS cut was imminent. **The Clerk was asked to check with KHS before authorising any work.** Cllr Mrs Soyke advised that Bidborough have a lengthsman who does this sort of work and she would investigate this further.

- 16. Tree survey of Langton Green Recreation Ground** – The issue was discussed and it was **AGREED** that the Council should finance a survey pending Amenities approval. The committee considered that the Council had a duty of care to have a survey carried out which would advise of any immediate work necessary and any work required in the future.
- 17. Notice Boards** – The committee **AGREED** that the clerk order a new notice board for the Langton Green office and this would be a three bay board.
- 18. Consideration of a request from Langton Green Primary School for a grant towards the School trip to Marchiennes** – It was **AGREED** that a grant of £500 be made to the school
- 19. Data Protection** – It was **AGREED** that the Council should become registered and approved the cost of £35
- 20. Banking** – The Clerk had written to all three clearing Banks and only received a reply from NatWest who would charge for an account of this type; however they did offer slightly better rates for bonds. HSBC requested a visit and Lloyds did not reply. The Clerk would investigate Unity Bank and Cooperative Bank and report.
Barclays Bank did not allow four signatories on our account.
- 21. Items for Information** – Cllr Jeffreys advised that she would be absent from the next Finance meeting

The meeting closed at 9.28pm

CHAIRMAN