

PETERSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Petersfield, on 18th January 2016 at 6.30 pm

PRESENT: Cllr G Watkinson (Chairman), Cllr Mrs H Ayer, Cllr J Deane, Cllr J Matthews, and Cllr P Strawbridge.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Mr N Hitch (Town Clerk) Mr S Field (Office & Committees Manager), two members of the public and Cllr Lesley Farrow. There were no members of the Press present.

F 0577 CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the year.

F 0578 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr P Humphries.

F 0579 GRANTING OF DISPENSATION UNDER SECTION 33 OF THE LOCALISM ACT

No requests for dispensation had been received.

F 0580 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

F 0581 PUBLIC REPRESENTATION

No representation to speak had been received.

F 0582 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th December 2015 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

F 0583 FINANCIAL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES

Public Halls meeting held on 11th January 2016

PH0557 FESTIVAL HALL LOUVRE PANELS

RESOLVED: That a quote for £3500 plus VAT be accepted for the installation of Louvre Panels in the Festival Hall subject to electrical expertise being sought regarding the use of metal panels and electrical cables. Members were advised that the successful contractor was FD Metalworks Ltd

G 0566 REPLACEMENT OF PAVING SLABS AT AVENUE PAVILION

RESOLVED: that a quote for £2,480 plus VAT be accepted for the replacement of paving slabs outside the Avenue Pavilion. Members were advised that the successful contractor was H Monfared Builders Ltd

G 0570 NEW CAST IRON PLANTERS

RESOLVED: that a quote for £1660.00 plus VAT be accepted for the addition of two new cast iron planters outside of 48 College Street, subject to Hampshire County Council Highways approving the licence

G 0573 IMPROVEMENTS TO FENCING AT VARIOUS RECREATION GROUNDS

RESOLVED: that a quote for a maximum of £6,177.18 plus VAT be accepted for the improvement of fences in Bell Hill, Borough Road and Penns Farm recreation grounds, subject to a negotiation on costs as all 3 contracts were awarded to one company. Members were advised that the successful contractor was Straight Line Fencing

G 0575 ST PETERS CHURCH YARD WALL

RESOLVED: that a quote for £2530.00 plus VAT be accepted for the repair to a section of St Peters Church Yard Wall. Members were advised that the successful contractor was E Canterbury Ltd

F 0584 TOWN CLERK'S FINANCIAL REPORT

Members received and noted the Finance Report from the Town Clerk, a copy of which is attached to these Minutes at *Appendix A*. Questions were raised and answered by the Town Clerk

F 0585 BANK RECONCILIATION

Members received and noted the latest bank reconciliation, together with balance sheet details, a copy of which is attached to these Minutes at *Appendix B*. Questions were raised and answered by the Town Clerk

F 0586 LOCAL COUNCIL SECTOR LED BODY FOR EXTERNAL AUDIT

Members received and noted a report regarding the Hampshire Association of Local Councils on the plans to create a sector led body to administer the procurement of external auditors for the local council sector from 2017 onwards. The Town Clerk explained how this new body had come into existence, and the options that faced the Council. The default position was for

Councils to opt into the new regime because opting out would result in significantly greater administration of the process and potentially greater costs.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Council remain 'opted in' as this was considered to be the most effective option for Petersfield Town Council

F0587 **BUDGET WORKING PARTY**

The Chairman explained how the budgets were assessed and proposed that a precept figure of £538,066 was approved. Members asked about the annual grant from East Hampshire District Council (EHDC) for the Council Tax Benefit Scheme. The Town Clerk confirmed that this was once again expected to be paid by EHDC but would be confirmed at their Cabinet Meeting in February. Members also questioned how the Reserves and in particular, Earmarked Reserves had grown to the level they had. The Town clerk explained that these were accumulations over a number of years for specific purposes, and some of these would 'mature' over the next year and be spent on the appropriate projects. This was accepted and welcomed as 'careful forward planning' to ensure that necessary work could be carried out. Further questions were asked and answered.

A detailed discussion and consideration then followed as to whether the Council should increase the precept by at least the rate of inflation, to ensure that some of the long-awaited projects could be fulfilled in 2016 as well as protecting the value of the Council's income. Members suggested that this should include the final funding required to carry out work on some of the playgrounds and heath toilets

RECOMMENDATION: that the Council increase the precept by 1% on Band D to specifically support identified projects

F0588 **PETERSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL WEB SITE**

Members raised and discussed a number of concerns regarding the layout and content of the current Wordpress web-site. These concerns would be drafted up by Cllr J Deane and emailed to the Office Manager. The Office Manager would write a document detailing the course of action that would be taken to address these concerns and present them to a future meeting of the Committee.

In view of the confidential nature of the business about to be discussed, it was

RESOLVED: that the public and press be asked to leave the meeting for the confidential session. Cllr L Farrow remained

CONFIDENTIAL

F0589 To consider any confidential staff, financial or other recommendations from committees.

Grounds meeting held on 14th January 2016

G 0576 RUGBY CLUB PITCH 4

Further discussions took place regarding the current issues with the existing contract, and the sub-letting of pitch 4 to Petersfield Junior Football Club.

Following discussion it was:

RECOMMENDED: that the Council await the outcome of a meeting being attended by Cllr Matthews and Cllr Strawbridge, where they will be presenting their findings regarding the current rental space, and proposing a way forward. If no agreement is reached, then full Council will be consulted regarding the claim on 'Pitch 4' in respect of the Landlord and Tenants Act 1954, and if necessary, a separate working party will be set up to progress this issue independently.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.15 p.m.