

Minutes of a meeting of the **FINANCE and ADMINISTRATION**
Committee held **VIRTUALLY/REMOTELY** on **Monday 22nd March 2021**
at 7pm in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime
Panel (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime
Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

PRESENT: Councillors Nick Anderson, Diana Kelly, Marcus Tarling,
Paul Watkins (Chair), Linsey Winter
In attendance: Deborah Siddle – Parish Clerk

Members of the public are encouraged to attend the meetings and there is a 10-minute opportunity at the start of the meeting for them to address the Council. There were two grant applicants present for item 6 and WPC's Highways Coordinator was present for item 5.

The representative for Withyham & Blackham PCC clarified that they were applying for £400-500 for the cutting of the churchyard at Blackham Church. A grant is required because the church has infrequent services, particularly during Covid, and so has a limited income.

The representative for St John the Evangelist Crowborough PCC outlined that their application was for two parts. The first relates to findings of rare habitats in the churchyard by Sussex Botanical Recording Society. This has resulted in a management plan to balance the wildlife with expectations of mourners and the decision that trained volunteers will undertake the grass cutting, requiring new equipment. The applicant confirmed that it would be unlikely that WPC grants would be needed in future years if volunteers were replacing contractors for this work. The second part of the application was to convert a stand-pipe to a tap and install an external electrical socket to provide water and power to the churchyard. The Clerk clarified that maintenance of church buildings are not eligible but that an addition of an external socket for the benefit of the graveyard would be. The applicant confirmed that Health and Safety aspects of volunteers undertaking the work had been considered and insurance would also be secured for items.

The meeting opened at 8.20pm.

1.ENQUIRE WHETHER ANYONE PRESENT INTENDS TO FILM, PHOTOGRAPH AND/OR RECORD THE MEETING - The meeting was recorded for the purposes of the minutes and would be destroyed once the minutes were written.

2. APOLOGIES - None

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – None.

4. MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2020

Committee members had not all received the same version of the minutes. They were therefore DEFERRED to the next meeting

4.2 Matters outstanding from these minutesCompleted actions from previous minutes

Page No	Who	Action
Pg. 2000	Clerk	Signage placed at Balls Green noticeboard to show defibrillator available at Kings' Hall
Pg. 2183	Clerks	Post Office noticeboard states that community notices can be seen at the porch of Groombridge Village Hall
Pg. 2184	Clerk	New grit bin placed at Withyham Station Road/Beech Green Lane before this year end
Pg. 2184	Clerk	Business Continuity policy recommended to Council
Pg. 2184	Clerk	Carbon policy recommended to Council
Pg. 2185	Clerk	Budget and Precept recommended to January Council

Outstanding items not on this agenda

Page No	Who	Action
Pg. 1821	Clerk	Consider Sussex Resilience Forum proforma
Pg. 2002	Clerk	Pursue free opportunities for advertising the meeting rooms
Pg. 2002	F&A	Review meeting room hire at next ~~Precept setting meeting~~ when hirings resume
Pg. 1283	F&A	Review position and size of post office noticeboard when WPC take ownership
Pg. 2184	Clerk	Check guidance on servers and recommend the GDPR guidance to Council
Pg. 2184	Clerk	Check length of investments and recommend the Borrowing and Investment policy to Council
Pg. 2184	Clerk	Purchase and install a new bin at Groombridge Recreation Ground car park in 2021/22

Actions from this meeting

Page No	Who	Action
Pg. 2255	Clerk	Notify ES Highways of WPCs approach to their advice on Design Standards
Pg. 2255	Clerk	Instruct ESH to move WPC streetlighting stock to part night lighting

Pg. 2256	Clerk	Place ornamental lantern on Newton Willows after structural testing undertaken
Pg. 2256	Clerk	Fund Withyham & Blackham PCC £500 for the upkeep of the churchyard at Blackham Church
Pg. 2256	Clerk	Fund St John the Evangelist Crowborough PCC fund £1,500 on receipt of 2 further quotes
Pg. 2257	Clerk	Undertake the works required to allow Groombridge Playground to reopen utilising the Playground EMR
Pg. 2257	Clerk	Newly repaired Cooks Corner noticeboard to be relocated to Blackham Village Hall.
Pg. 2257	Cllr Tarling	Deliver Cooks Corner noticeboard to the Parish Office
Pg. 2257	Clerk	Cross reference F&A and Staff Committee Terms of References to eliminate duplication
Pg. 2257	Clerk	Recommend the Health & Safety Policy to Council
Pg. 2257	Clerk	Recommend the Pay Policy to Council
Pg. 2257	Clerk	Recommend the Grass/Hedge Policy to Council
Pg. 2257	Clerk	Recommend the Fees & Charges Policy to Council
Pg. 2258	Clerk	Vire £350 from 4003 Parish Maintenance (salaries) to 4407 Parish Maintenance Equipment (rename) in the 2021/22 budget
Pg. 2258	Clerk	Make Journals as agreed
Pg. 2260	Clerk	Recommend EMRs for 2021/22 to Council
Pg. 2260	Clerk	December F&A Minutes, St John's Preschool access path, 3 year grass cutting contract and F&A Terms of Reference to next meeting

5. STREETLIGHTS

5.1 To consider ES Highways' advice regarding Design Standards for Streetlights

Prior to the meeting Eric Ware (Electrical Supervisor at ES Highways) briefed members of F&A and WPC's Highways Coordinator on this item. ES Highways wished to notify Councils that their streetlighting schemes are unlikely to meet CDM regs 2015 which give guidance on levels of lighting required on particular types of roads. In future whenever a quote is offered to the Parish Council by ESH, such as to change a lantern, the town/parish will be asked to accept the risk that the overall road does not comply to a Design Standard. It was explained that if an incident happens

solicitors might look at whether the lighting contributed, however there is also no legal requirement to have streetlighting in place, except if there is a hazard such as a build-out which should be illuminated.

F&A discussed this and made the following observations:

- Costs of undertaking design plans and subsequent works to meet them by respacing and adding columns would likely be very high
- Historically streetlights in Withyham parish would have been more for the benefit of pedestrians than road users and their spacings would reflect that
- Current positioning of streetlighting is appropriate to the rural nature of the parish
- Dark Skies policy and light pollution concerns mean that residents would be unlikely to want more columns
- There is no significant history of road traffic collisions on roads that currently have streetlights
- The risk of the Council being held accountable in the case of an accident because of the lighting (or lack of it meeting Design Standards) is low, and would be unlikely to be a stand-alone factor.

On the basis of the above, the Committee AGREED that the potential risk is not sufficiently high to instigate Design Guides or changes to the current WPC owned streetlights. It will therefore accept the risk that the overall road does not comply to a Design Standard when accepting a quote from ES Highways for works to existing streetlighting. Clerk to notify ES Highways.

5.2 To re-consider part-night lighting of lighting stock

At its December 2019 meeting F&A considered costs obtained from ES Highways to move the parish streetlighting stock to part-night lighting. It was agreed that part night lighting would assist in making positive contributions to the WPC Carbon Policy and Dark Skies policy, and reduce WPC annual electricity costs, and therefore should be instigated across WPC's streetlighting stock.

Due to workloads and issues consulting with members of the public during Covid-19 the Clerk had been unable to move this initiative forward. Bearing in mind this delay and because of likely impact on the 2021/22 budget due to works not being invoiced in 2020/21 when budget had been allocated, the Clerk wished to confirm with F&A that this work should proceed.

A paper had been circulated prior to the meeting outlining the benefits and potential issues. This was discussed and the previous decision affirmed.

002037 RESOLVED as per previous decision that all Withyham Parish Council streetlighting stock moves to part night lighting (where current lanterns allow).

5.3 To receive and consider information on Salix Loans

Salix Loans are available to Councils to fund energy efficiency projects. LED lantern replacements are eligible and the repayments would be made

through savings on the energy bill. It is unclear whether the scheme would cover installation costs, and it would not cover new columns.

WPC currently has a programme of transition, moving 6 to 8 streetlights across to LED lanterns each year through budgeted/Precepted expenditure. There are half still to be done but some may be more complex than others where columns are older.

The Committee AGREED to continue the current programme of transition to LED lanterns through budgeted/Precepted expenditure.

5.4 To consider a site for the ornamental lantern

WPC owns 2 LED ornamental/swan-necked lanterns, one of which is by the bus stop at the Victoria roundabout. The other was outside 3 Corseley Road but was replaced by a standard LED due to residents' complaints about the level of light entering their homes and is now in storage.

As the ornamental lantern gives 360 degree light rather than forward light like a standard LED, it is best placed away from properties. A location at the top of Newton Willows with the Cricket Ground behind was suggested and AGREED. The existing column is due for structural testing so the results of this should be awaited first.

6. GRANTS – to consider applications

March 2021 Council had considered an application from Withyham Watch for signage and agreed that up to £1,000 should be made available from the 2021/22 budget. This leaves £9,000 remaining in the 2021/22 budget for applications.

The application for Withyham & Blackham PCC was considered. It was AGREED to fund £500 towards the upkeep of the churchyard at Blackham Church.

The application for St John the Evangelist Crowborough PCC was considered. It was noted that only 1 quote had been obtained for the tap and power socket. AGREED to fund £1,500 for volunteers' grass cutting equipment and installation of an external tap and power supply. To be paid on receipt of 1, preferably 2 further quotes for the tap and power socket.

002038 RESOLVED to fund grants to Withyham & Blackham PCC and St John the Evangelist Crowborough PCC totalling £2,000 from a remaining Grants budget of £9,000.

The two grant applicants left the meeting.

7. GROOMBRIDGE PLAY AREA – update on refurbishment and to consider expenditure to re-open existing equipment in interim

The meeting received the notes of the last Groombridge Playground Group where it was AGREED to repeat the Tender process as the last process had been unsuccessful due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The Group had also given support to the current play-area being re-opened in the interim as it had remained closed following a Play Inspection report which identified several safety issues. Members of the Group volunteered their time towards making the play area ready, and supported some of the Playground Earmarked Reserves being utilised for woodchips, items of equipment and contractors should some works not be suitable for volunteers to undertake. To meet Insurance requirements a ROSPA inspection would be needed before opening if equipment was fixed by people not ROSPA trained.

002039 RESOLVED to undertake the works required to allow Groombridge Playground to reopen utilising the Playground EMR.

8. WPC NOTICEBOARDS – to consider Blackham Village Hall and Cooks Corner noticeboards

At the last Committee meeting the suitability and accessibility of the Cooks Corner site for a noticeboard had been discussed. The Maintenance Person had also flagged up the poor condition of the Blackham Village Hall noticeboard. The Committee AGREED the newly repaired Cooks Corner noticeboard should be relocated to Blackham Village Hall. Cllr Tarling would deliver it to the Parish Office.

9. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

9.1 Finance & Administration Committee Terms of Reference

DEFERRED to the next meeting. Cross reference with Staff Committee Terms of Reference to eliminate duplication.

9.2 Health and Safety Policy

002040 RESOLVED to recommend the Health & Safety Policy to Council.

9.3 Pay policy

002041 RESOLVED to recommend the Pay Policy to Council.

9.4 Grass/Hedge and Trees Policy

002042 RESOLVED to recommend the Grass/Hedge Policy to Council.

9.5 Fees and Charges Policy

002043 RESOLVED to recommend the Fees & Charges Policy to Council.

The Highways Coordinator left the meeting.

10. ACCOUNTS & FINANCE

10.1 To note expenditure against budget report to March 2021

This was circulated prior to the meeting and noted.

10.2 To consider virements and journals required before Year End

The Clerk had prepared a report for the Committee showing budgets with an overspend of more than 15%. The Committee noted these and agreed it would not make a material difference to 2020/21 budgets at year end if virements were made to these.

Recent guidance received on salary budgets is that they should not include any mileage or other travelling/subsistence expenditure. It was therefore AGREED that for 2021/22 £350 should be vired from 4003 Parish

F and A/22.3.2021 – 002258

Maintenance (salaries) to 4407 Parish Maintenance Equipment (rename) for mileage costs.

002044 RESOLVED to vire £350 from 4003 Parish Maintenance (salaries) to 4407 Parish Maintenance Equipment (rename) in the 2021/22 budget.

The following 2020/21 Journals were AGREED:

Code	Name	Credit	Debit	Reason
4003	Parish Maintenance Contract	343.16		4003 is a staff cost budget and should not include mileage undertaken by the PMP in his role
4407	Parish Maintenance Equipment (RENAME "...& Mileage")		343.16	As 4003
4040	Audit & Legal Fees	3660.25		Expenditure incurred on Groombridge Post Office – CIC and surveys
4061	Parish Action Plan & Projects	130.14		Post office DBS checks
5200	Post Office Purchase & Convert		3660.25 130.14 (Total £3790.39)	Utilise this budget for expenditure incurred on Groombridge Post Office – CIC and surveys, and Post office DBS checks. Allows clearer reporting.

002045 RESOLVED to make the above 2020/21 Journals.

10.3 To note 2021/22 Budget

This was circulated prior to the meeting and noted.

10.4 To consider Ear-marked Reserves for 2021/22

The following Earmarked Reserves were considered and agreed:

Code	Name	Balance at 22.3.21	Proposed Net Transfer	Notes	Recommended EMR 21/22
326	EMR Balls Green Play area	5,835		Consult on outdoor exercise equipment	5,835
327	EMR Groombridge Play area	25,425.50	150 835 Total £985	£150 donation received December 2020 for the Playground project Remaining budgets from 4201 £200, 4202 £435, 4220 £200 carried forwards to EMR for interim improvements	26,410.50

F and A/22.3.2021 – 002259

329	EMR Road Safety Projects	23,350.37	-8,350.37	Ideas from RSC yet to be developed further: White gates Further SID locations.	15,000
330	Work in Progress	0	2,350 3,000 2,400 1,500	Tree inspection in 2020/21 delayed (Covid) so underspent 4230 Trees budget £2,350 to EMR for survey and actions Council agreed defibrillator at Blackham Village Hall to be funded from General Reserves in 2020. Move £3,000 from General Reserves to this EMR to complete this project Part-night-lighting not completed in 2020, £2,400 of underspent 4452 new columns to EMR LED replacements for 2020/21 in progress not invoiced before year end. £1,500 of underspent 4451 lights repairs & renewals to EMR	9,250
332	Withyham Parish Volunteers	2,900	-900		2,000
333	Office Associated Repairs	5,000.40		Items of work expected 2021/22: -Identify issue with kitchen roof/roof space insulation & make good -Kitchen ceiling and walls where damp/water staining -Repair and repaint outside woodwork (requirement of lease) <i>There is a revenue budget line for</i>	5,000.40

				<i>2021/22 of £2,000 so EMRs will be required to supplement that</i>	
336	CiL (use £5,163 by Oct 23 & £4333.19 by Oct 25)	9,496.19		Additional £4,133 received 2020/21 and attributed to EMR. Must be used within 5 years of receipt, as per the CiL policy. Examples of likely need in 2021/22: -Council agreed to look at access path surfacing at Reading Room after drainage completed -Council agreed to consult residents on some play equipment at Teasley Mead. -Council agreed an additional bin at Groombridge car park after removal of recycling centre, and to consider replacement at Newton Willows	9,496.19
337	Parish Assets	15,000	-10,000	CiL can be used for parish assets	5,000
338	Environmental improvements	10,000		EMR first set up 2020/21 to respond to WPC carbon policy	10,000
NEW	Post Office convert	0	28,895	£10,000 donation and rest general reserves	28,895
		97,007.46			116,887.09

With likely year end position, Earmarked Reserves of £116,887.09 should leave around £76,000 in General Reserves which is within the Internal Auditors' guidance of a third to half of Precept.

002046 RESOLVED to recommend the 2021/22 Earmarked Reserves to Council.

12. CLERK/RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT

Year end work would be undertaken in the coming weeks by the Clerk/RFO and, due to Covid-19, Internal Audit will be conducted virtually, as was the case with the last half year audit.

13. MATTERS OF URGENT IMPORTANCE FOR NOTING OR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

Matters for next agenda:

- St John's Preschool access path
- 3-year grass cutting contract
- F&A Terms of Reference

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 24th May 2021 at 7.30pm.

The meeting ended at 9.45pm