

Minutes of a meeting of the **FINANCE and ADMINISTRATION**
Committee held at **GROOMBRIDGE OLD STATION** on **Monday 23rd**
May 2022 at 7pm

PRESENT: Councillors Nick Anderson, Andrew Fane, 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 2 members of the public present (1 on Zoom) for agenda item 7 Grants.

A representative for Groombridge St Thomas' Church explained that they were applying for £1,150 towards grass cutting at Groombridge cemetery. The cemetery is available for anyone from the parish, not just church goers. Whilst the representative was unable to confirm the frequency of cuts, she confirmed that the contractor has been doing it for a while and always ensures it is well kept.

The representative for Wealden Citizen's Advice explained that they offer free, confidential advice as well as campaigning on issues which affect residents. They have 3 offices across the District, supporting around 4,000 people per year often through the free telephone line. Over the past year the majority of support has been around benefits, tax credits and debt support as people struggle with the cost of living. The grant would contribute towards a specialist energy advisor, and they felt that the £850 requested was an appropriate amount to apply for based on the size of the parish.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

002281 RESOLVED unanimously that Cllr Watkins should be the Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee.

2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

002282 RESOLVED unanimously that Cllr Winter should be the Vice Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee.

3. ENQUIRE WHETHER ANYONE PRESENT INTENDS TO FILM, PHOTOGRAPH AND/OR RECORD THE MEETING - none.

4. APOLOGIES – Cllr Robert Gordon-James– illness

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – Cllr Kelly explained that she attends St Thomas' Church but, having checked with the Clerk this isn't a declarable interest under appendices A or B of the Code of Conduct.

6. MINUTES

6.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 28th March 2022

002283 RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the meeting held on 28th March 2022, which were duly signed by the Chairman

6.2 Matters outstanding from these minutes

The Committee noted that SVR would be invoiced their contribution to the external paintwork once WPC had been invoiced.

Completed actions from previous minutes

Page No	Who	Action
002227	April Council	Grants made to Withyham & Blackham PCC, Groombridge Preschool and St Michael's School Withyham totalling £2,066.23
002228	Clerk	Quote accepted for external works at Groombridge Station, works completed
002229	Clerk	Streetlight repair at Withyham Road re-instructed
002230	Clerk	Health & Safety Policy recommended, for review in 3 years
002231	Clerk	Policy for Grass, Verges, Hedges, Trees recommended
002232	Clerk	List of Fees & Charges recommended
002233	Clerk	Risk Management Policy recommended
002234	Clerk	Pay Policy recommended
002235	Clerk	Business Continuity Plan recommended
002236	Clerk	Amended Financial Regulations recommended

Outstanding items not on this agenda

Page No	Who	Action
Pg. 2002	Clerk	Pursue free opportunities for advertising the meeting rooms
Pg. 2002	F&A	Review meeting room hire when hirings resume
Pg. 1283	F&A	Review position and size of post office noticeboard when WPC take ownership
Pg. 2257	Clerk	Newly repaired Cooks Corner noticeboard to be relocated to Blackham Village Hall
Pg. 2413	Clerk	Ask other Wealden Clerks which streetlighting contractor they use
Pg. 2455	Clerk	Obtain quotes for grass cutting from 2023 to 2025 based on the agreed specification
002229	Clerk	Re-instruct up to 6 more LED upgrades
Pg. 2458	Clerk	Obtain quotes for Reading Room access path
Pg. 2459	Clerk	Obtain quotes for Old Station kitchen roof/ceiling

Actions from this meeting

Page No	Who	Action
Pg. 2498	Clerk	Invoice SVR their contribution to the external paintwork once WPC has been invoiced

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002284	Clerk	Make grants to Wealden Citizen's Advice and Groombridge St Thomas' Church totalling £2,000
002285	Clerk	Recommend amended F&A Terms of Reference to Council
Pg. 2500	Staff Committee	Consider changing their name to 'Staff and Administration Committee'
002286	Clerk	Source and set up a third bank account
002287	Clerk	Set up the bank mandate for the third bank account
Pg. 2501	next Council agenda	Additional equipment for Balls Green Community Space
Pg. 2501	next Council agenda	Review Playground Earmarked Reserves
002288	Clerk	Amend WPC bank mandates for HSBC and Nationwide
Pg. 2501	Cllr Tarling	Assist with specification for Old Station maintenance works (kitchen roof/ceiling)
Pg. 2501	Next F&A	St John's Preschool access path, Grasscutting quotes and Old Station maintenance works

7. GRANTS – to consider applications

The application for Wealden Citizen's Advice was considered; the Committee agreed that the service is needed more than ever and that it is essential WPC does its bit to support it. It was AGREED to fund £850 towards a specialist energy advisor.

The application for Groombridge St Thomas' Church was considered and it was AGREED to fund £1,150 towards grass cutting at Groombridge cemetery.

002284 RESOLVED to fund grants to Wealden Citizen's Advice and Groombridge St Thomas' Church totalling £2,000 from a remaining 2022/23 Grants budget of £7,933.77.

The members of the public left the meeting.

8. TERMS OF REFERENCE – to review for recommendation to council
Staff Committee has recommended that the Committee:

- Reviews its name to clarify that it does not handle staffing matters, perhaps 'Finance Committee' instead.
- Considers any crossovers with Staff Committee's remit in the Terms of Reference.

The Committee noted that the Staff Committee is a relatively new Committee and as such elements of F&As role are now within Staff Committee's remit. It was AGREED that the Committee's name should be changed to 'Finance Committee' and that items within the Terms of

reference that refer to administration/staffing should be removed. It was also recommended that the constitution of the Committee “shall preferably consist of seven members [across a geographical mix].”

002285 RESOLVED to recommend the amended Terms of Reference to Council.

It was recommended that Staff Committee should consider changing their name to ‘Staff and Administration Committee’ to reflect the attention the pay to workloads, workload planning and Council/Committee structure.

9. INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATION – to consider an additional bank account

The recent audit noted the council holds in excess of the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) protection limit on its HSBC accounts and recommended the council considers the benefits of opening another account with an alternate provider to maximise the FSCS protection available. The FSCS limit is currently £85,000 per institution.

F&A considered this and AGREED that the Council should work within the FSCS limits guidelines. The Clerk was asked to proceed with a third account, and to check whether the limit is per institution or group of banks to ensure compliance.

002286 RESOLVED to instruct the Clerk to source and set up a third account (following the guidelines provided by the Borrowing and Investment Policy) and transfer the excess funds from the HSBC accounts to that, closing the ‘HSBC Deposit account’ at the same time. Subsequently, the Clerk to maintain the accounts so no account has more than £85,000.

002287 RESOLVED to instruct the Clerk to set up the bank mandate for the new institution (as per the Financial Regulations), to include the current members of Finance Committee on the Mandate.

10. ACCOUNTS & FINANCE

10.1 To note expenditure against budget report to May 2022

The report was noted. Expenditure against 4502 Office Utilities was queried and the meeting was referred back to the May Council minutes.

10.2 To consider any virements and journals required

None required.

10.3 Three Year Budget

A draft budget had been drafted showing the previous year (2021/22), current year (2022/23) and next year (2023/24).

This has been written by looking back at previous expenditure and considering future requirements based on our assets, liabilities and the current Parish Plan which runs to end of 2023/4. The newly elected Council of 2023 will be responsible for a new 4 year Parish Plan from April 2024 - March 2028. Years beyond 2023/24 do not currently have a draft budget therefore as we are without a parish plan for that point forwards

F and A/23.5.2022 – 002501

The Committee noted the report. It was queried whether the allocation for additional equipment for 326 Balls Green Community Space was still required. The Clerk was asked to put this on the next Council agenda.

It was suggested that the 3 play equipment Earmarked Reserves could be amalgamated to reduce the loan for Groombridge play area. The Clerk explained Earmarked Reserves are not precepted monies and take time to replenish so would provide figures to show potential impact on loan repayments.

10.4 To instruct the Clerk to revise Council bank mandates to include Committee members

002288 RESOLVED to instruct the Clerk to amend WPC bank mandates for HSBC and Nationwide to include the current Councillor members of Finance Committee on the Mandate.

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

Matters for next agenda:

- St John's Preschool access path
- Old Station maintenance works (kitchen roof/ceiling) - Cllr Tarling to assist with the specification
- Grass cutting quotes

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 25th July 2022 at 7.30pm at the Old Station.

The meeting ended at 8pm