

Steyning Parish Council



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MEETING OF FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 15th OCTOBER 2019 AT 7.30PM IN THE STEYNING CENTRE

Present: Cllrs Goldsmith, Campbell, G Sullivan, Cree, Saunders, Lloyd and S. Sullivan.

Clerk: John Fullbrook

Members of the Public in attendance: 5

Meeting commenced: 7:30pm

MINUTES (Non-Confidential)

ACTIONS

F&GP/19/46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies received from Cllrs Hanson and Taylor

F&GP/19/47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

Cllr Campbell, Cllr Goldsmith, Cllr G. Sullivan, Cllr S. Sullivan and Cllr Cree declared an interest relating to item 16, Cllr Campbell having discussed it with the monitoring officer.

F&GP/19/48 QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

48.1.1

Q – Mike Kelly - Cllr Goldsmith signed the election address, dated 16th April 2019. It was sent to societies and groups in Steyning, in which Cllr Goldsmith declared that he was "the promoter of the election communication made on behalf of the Steyning First Party". I wish to know why he was the signatory (along with both Councillor Sullivan's) when it was clear that the e-mail was actually sent by Cllr Campbell. Second, why the SF Party's policy for "100% affordable housing" in the Neighbourhood Plan was not acted upon. Instead Cllr Campbell went directly against the NP Steering Group's expressed wishes for housing (and opposition to the allocation of Green Spaces). His resolution opposing the Steering Group (passed by SF councillors), prevented a full Neighbourhood Plan being put to residents during consultation. Thirdly, Steyning First promised openness and said they "would not operate as a clique". Yet my own observations show the voting records of the council demonstrate a clear bias in favour of anything Cllr Campbell supports or opposes. I am not the sole person who has observed this tendency.

48.1.2

A – Cllr Campbell – regarding the document dated 16th April, I have no recollection of these events so cannot answer that, if this had been a written question then I could have given a considered reply rather than ambushing us, and I suggest we'll come back to this. We have answered the question regarding unfortunately not having housing as part of our Neighbourhood plan many times, in that it was taken out of our hands, and thirdly we all have our own opinions, and if a number of us are like minded and share similar values, then it wouldn't be surprising that voting records show that.

Cllrs
Campbell/
Goldsmith

48.2.1

Q – Mr Bowell – First 16.1 can I request you take a recorded vote any decisions taken please, second 17.1 - I'm disturbed to see you are intending to move £10,000 from Reserves into a budget for HR

consultancy – In previous Council we had an excellent system that worked – we appointed a very competent Clerk who is still with us – he has brought a wealth of knowledge and experience with him. He does all the appraisals except his own because all the other staff report to him so there is already a system well in hand therefore there is only one appraisal required to be done and one of the two Councillors who has previously done them is still on the Council and is fully able to carry out that appraisal for you and perhaps help other councillors through the process.

48.2.2 A- Cllr Goldsmith - Thank you

48.3.1 Q – Mr Muggridge – item 17.1 – In all previous Councils, there seems to have been enough knowledge within the Council to deal with all employment issues like appraisals. The Clerk and deputy Clerk conduct all but one appraisal so why are the current leaders of Steyning PC and, for that matter, Steyning First planning to spend £10,000 on this activity especially when there are members of the council who clearly have some background in this area. Why then were they not appointed to this committee and how can £10,000 spent on this be considered appropriate use of taxpayers' money? I'll add that the Clerk holds the most senior role in the Council bar none and is also an employee of the whole council, not just the Chairman and Vice chairman. In view of the history between those individuals and this Clerk and a number of former Clerks, and due to the apparent lack of experience from these Councillors, I'm surprised that they are the ones directing these HR matters.

48.3.2 A – Cllr Goldsmith - Okay

48.4.1 Q – Written question from Mr Bissett Powell – Has the Parish Council received any independent advice regarding item 16.1 relating to Defamation, you might mean alleged defamation and if so did that advice confirm that a public body such as the Parish Council, according to the Defamation Act 2013, cannot sue for it.

48.4.2 A- Cllr Goldsmith replied – Any written advice we have has legal privilege and is confidential so we will respond to that to Mr Bissett Powell.

F&GP/19/49 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

49.1 Cllr S. Sullivan **proposed**, and Cllr Campbell **seconded** that the minutes for the meeting held on 10th September 2019 be accepted as a true record of the proceedings. **Agreed 6 For, 1 Abstained (TL)**

F&GP/19/50 MATTERS ARISING AND ACTIONS

50.1 F&GP/19/40.1 Support for 'Vintage Years' to be taken to Full Council – **See item 53.1**

50.2 F&GP/19/41.1 Bowls Lease Agreement amended and taken to Club for signing – **Actioned**. – Clerk to send a copy out to councillors before Clerk signs **CLERK**

50.3 F&GP/19/42.1 Minutes of July F&GP amended – **Actioned**, Clerk to check the amended version is on the web site. **CLERK**

50.4 F&GP/19/19.3 Toilet Block Lease to be reviewed by working party – **Ongoing**

50.5 F&GP/19/43.7 External Audit review – Clerk to send SPC Councillors associated emails – **Actioned**

50.6 F&GP/19/43.17 Emergency plan to be reviewed by Clerk – **Ongoing**

50.7 F&GP/19/43.18 Grand Piano Gifting - Item deferred to be discussed at next meeting **CLERK**

50.8 F&GP/19/44.3 Clerk to revisit Swimming pool payments on next Agenda – **Ongoing**

50.9 F&GP/19/44.5.1 Agreed Funding released to Royal British Legion (RBL)- £175 **Actioned**

- 50.10** F&GP/19/44.5.2 Agreed Room Hire discount for RBL to value of £108 put through system – **Actioned**
- 50.11** F&GP/19/45.2 Clerk to set aside additional £5,000 earmarked reserves under Neighbourhood Plan – **Actioned**
- 50.12** F&GP/19/45.2 Neighbourhood Plan Consultation promotion approved – **Actioned**
- 50.13** F&GP/19/19.6 Financial Matters training for Councillors – further dates required – **Ongoing with Clerk awaiting further interest from Councillors**
- 50.14** F&GP/19/25.1 Future Newsletter publication to be drafted – **See item 54.1**

F&GP/19/51 FINANCE MATTERS

- 51.1** Cllr Goldsmith **proposed, seconded** by Cllr G. Sullivan to approve list of payments for September 2019. **Agreed 6 For, 1 Abstained (PC)** - Clerk to add location of utility payments, and to add that figures include VAT **CLERK**
- 51.2** Cllr Goldsmith **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Cree to agree Income & expenditure report for September 2019 is an accurate statement. **Agreed 6 For 1 Abstained**
- 51.3** To resolve to transfer £5,000 from reserves to the budget line ('legal and elections') thereby increasing that line from £5,000 to £10,000. Cllr Campbell explained the reasons for this, first the probable election, second, we have two big items within the confidential session. Because this item involves confidential discussions this item was left to confidential session. Cllr Campbell **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Cree that this item be transferred to confidential. **Agreed 6 For, 1 Abstained**
- 51.4** To discuss and agree support to fund Christmas tree lighting in Steyning. Cllr Goldsmith **proposed, seconded** by Cllr G. Sullivan that SPC contributes / Grants £1,500 to the Chamber of Trade towards its Christmas lights in the Steyning High St. **Agreed.** **CLERK**
- 51.5** To discuss and agree F&GP Timeline for decisions for the next financial year '20/21. The Clerk presented a timeline for the Committee's understanding of the process of creating a budget for next year. The Clerk also ran through thoughts on how the Council arrives at a final decision on its Precept request.
- 51.6** Signed Financial Reconciliation and Bank Statements for first two quarters of the year 2019/20 – Cllr Goldsmith reported that these checks had been completed.
- 51.7** To discuss and agree Internal Audit actions which include 'Notice of Public Rights' and Section 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance statements for 2018/19. The Clerk explained how important and urgent it now was to agree these items so that they could be approved at Council for final sign off. Cllr Cree listed a number of matters he considered important and which he said had been incorrectly recorded in the External Auditors recent letter. Cllr Lloyd suggested that Cllr Cree could prepare a written report. Cllr Cree had already provided this to the External Auditor which all Councillors had copies of. Cllr Campbell personally agreed to all elements of the Annual Governance Certificate other than Part 1 – Governance and said he doubted he could agree to sections 1,2,3,5 & 6, of Part 1 and he listed his areas of concern. Cllr Goldsmith said he didn't feel he could agree to any section of the statement without seeing the complete exchange of emails between the Clerk and the External Auditors. The Clerk explained that he had already supplied every substantive email exchange. Clerk to continue to supply more email exchanges and re-send previous bundle of email exchanges and to answer subsequent questions sent by Cllr Campbell in relation to these email exchanges. Cllr Campbell **proposed,** **CLERK**

seconded by Cllr Goldsmith that the Chair and Vice Chairman of the Council be given delegated authority to draft a letter of explanation to both the External and Internal Auditors to explain why the committee felt they were not able to sign off and adopt these statements, such letter to include input from other councillors as they think fit. **Agreed**

- F&GP/19/52** **ANY ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS REQUIRING FINANCIAL APPROVAL**
52.1 **Premises Committee** – Meetings dated 3rd Sept./ 8th October – Nothing to report
- 52.2** **Amenities Committee** – Meetings dated 23rd July / 24th September. Only one item of note from the meeting on the 23rd July, that was Approx. £1000 works to trees on the MPF were agreed to be completed. Nothing from 24th Sept.
- 52.3** **N.P. Steering committee** - No Meetings since last F&GP

- F&GP/19/53** **DATA PROTECTION**
53.1 It has been a busy month for the Clerk with 22 hours spent on FOI, SAR and GDPR items as well as letters of complaint and dealings with Code of Conduct issues which are in the large part being dealt with by the Monitoring Office from HDC. There is a great deal more to do with another 2 FOI requests having come in in the last two days. The Clerk was searching for a date in which to call for assistance from the FOI panel. He also explained that his workload was currently excessive, and he hoped that recent discussions with the Chairman would bring some resolution to this. **CLERK**
Cllr Goldsmith

- 53.2** When questioned about details, the Clerk explained that Steyning has a busier Parish Council than most anyway with at least five Council / Committee meetings per month, but especially now with the NP consultation process taking time, many service contracts requiring resolution, Councillor resignations, elections and an overwhelming list of Councillor code of conduct issues, FOI, SA Requests and divisive email activity. In addition to this statement, the Chairman explained that normally the August period provides a catch-up time for Council Admin with generally only one planning meeting scheduled, however this Summer there had been five additional Committee / Council meetings which had left both Administrative staff and many Councillors without a break.

- F&GP/19/54** **COMMUNITY GROUP ASSISTANCE PROJECT**
54.1 Vintage Years – Clerk to ensure Advert to go on Web site and Notice boards **CLERK**

- 54.2** Millennium Awards – Admin team have already advertised the awards within 'Your Steyning' and put the usual adverts up in notice boards and on the Web site, and nominations will be discussed next F&GP Meeting.

- F&GP/19/55** **MEDIA**
55.1 The Chairman tabled a Newsletter idea and reported on possible future publications – Clerk to gain two equivalent quotes. **CLERK**

- 55.2** Cllr Saunders confirmed in her opinion there ought to be an SPC Facebook page and suggested an approach to the posting of documents, Agendas, minutes etc and focus on good news items projects and suggested using video clips to publicise events, but committee agreed to defer this for a few months with in the meantime Cllr Saunders writing a briefing note with input from other Cllrs. **Cllr Saunders**

F&GP/19/56 PLANS AND PROJECTS

- 56.1** Premises and Amenities committees need to look at prioritising projects more carefully and feeding this back to F&GP to enable more enlightened Budgetary discussions.

F&GP/19/57 INFORMATION/CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

- 57.1** The Joint Parishes Youth Committee will be discussing at an EOM shortly the next 3-year service contract. Clerk updated on the Bongo Bus situation. The committee felt the Bus should be sold 'as seen' and that SPC could not offer transportation and storage facilities in the meantime. Cllr Lloyd **proposed, seconded** by S. Sullivan that subject to consultation with the other two parishes the two existing offers should be pursued on the basis that SPC is not in a position to store the vehicle. **Agreed** **CLERK**
- 57.2** Grass Cutting contract to be discussed at next meeting **CLERK**

F&GP/19/58 ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

- 58.1** Nothing to take forward.

F&GP/19/59 CONFIDENTIAL SESSION

- 59.1** Cllr Goldsmith **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Gary Sullivan that the committee go into confidential session . **Agreed**

F&GP/19/60 STREET CLEANING AND BIN EMPTYING CONTRACTS

- 60.1** Cllr Goldsmith **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Cree that the Council agree to use the services of HDC for two Bin empties (lifts) per week (Monday and Friday @£2.49 per lift x 13 Bins) taking costs up to the end of the financial year. **Agreed. 6 For, 1 Abstained (TL).** This to be reviewed for the next financial year **CLERK**
- 60.2** Cllr Goldsmith **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Cree {The motion detailed within item 60.2 within the Confidential Minutes of the F&GP Meeting on the 15th October 2019}. **Agreed 6 For,1 Abstain(TL)**

F&GP/19/61 POTENTIAL DEFAMATION PROCEEDINGS

- 61.1** Cllr Campbell **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Goldsmith that committee adjourn this item until the next F&GP meeting. **Agreed 6 For,1 Against (TL)** **CLERK**

F&GP/19/62 HR SERVICES

- 62.1** Cllr Goldsmith proposed the committee discussed all three items together, but Committee ran out of time to fully discuss this item and arrive at a decision

F&GP/19/63 DATE OF NEXT MEETING 12th NOVEMBER 2019

The Chairman closed the meeting at 10.30 pm

Signed Date 12th November 2019

Chairman of F&GP Committee