

Steypning Parish Council



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MEETING OF FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 10th MARCH 2020 AT 7.30PM IN THE STEYNING CENTRE

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

Clerk: John Fullbrook

Members of the Public in attendance: 2

Meeting commenced: 7:30pm

MINUTES

ACTIONS

F&GP/19/126 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies received from Cllr Lloyd and Cllr Taylor.

F&GP/19/127 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

None

F&GP/19/128 QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

128.1.1

Q – *'My representation pertains to the items that are up for discussion in tonight's confidential session in relation to amendments to conduct policies. I would like to clarify that I recently made a successful complaint to Horsham District Council standards committee against Councillor Steve Northam in response to his persistent bullying and harassment of me online to disclose my identity and reveal my personal details. The complaint was anonymised for good reasons which the standards committee respected and agreed with; therefore, I do not wish my name to be mentioned or put in the committee minutes. You are aware that the standards committee determined that Cllr Northam was behaving disrespectfully, that he was found to be in breach of the code of conduct for bullying and was deemed to be bringing the council into disrepute as a consequence of his postings on social media. I received a formal apology from Cllr Northam today and whilst I am grateful that he has apologised for behaving disrespectfully and removed those posts, he has refused to accept the standard committee's findings that his behaviour constituted bullying. I am not proud of the fact that I had to make a formal complaint about this, and I am not particularly pleased to be standing up here speaking now, but I am only doing so because of that refusal of admission and because there are a number of policies due to be discussed in this evening's confidential session that relate to bullying, harassment, dignity at work and overall conduct. I can only assume that these policies have been recently discussed and recommendations made on the basis of the outcome from previous complaints, including my own. I am presuming that these local policies, as with any public organisation, provide an alternative to the Code of Conduct process and are in place to provide guidance and direction for councillors as a means of protecting them, the reputation of the council and members of the public, and to minimise the risk of conduct breaches and complaints occurring in the first place. I would like to express my thanks that these policies are being reviewed and amendments are being suggested that can only serve to improve standards at a local parish council level. This is a very positive and reassuring development and I would like to ask, as someone who has been bullied by a councillor, that these amendments be taken very seriously by members of the F&GP so that other members of the public and other councillors, do not find themselves in similar situations. Bullying in any form is completely unacceptable and does very little to inspire others to become involved in local politics, nor does it encourage good councillors to remain in post. If councillors are provided with clear guidance at the start of their term (and I would hope that the recommended amendments add further clarity, transparency and rigour to the current policies), then hopefully the*

community they serve to represent will benefit from their willingness to abide by these policies, thereby helping to prevent disrespectful, bullying behaviour from becoming a prominent and extremely unsavoury recurring theme within this council.

128.1.2 **A – Cllr Goldsmith - Thanks very much**

A – Cllr Campbell - We are dealing with policy documents later this evening, though part of it will necessarily be within confidential session, but its no secret to say I had a conversation with the monitoring officer and her colleague today and though they have not seen the specific policies they are very much in favour of the aims of the policies.

F&GP/19/129 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

129.1 Cllr Goldsmith **proposed**, and Cllr G. Sullivan **seconded** that the Draft minutes for the meeting held on 11th February 2020 be accepted as a true record of the proceedings. **Agreed**

129.2 Cllr Goldsmith **proposed**, and Cllr S. Sullivan **seconded** that the Draft minutes for the extra ordinary meeting held on 25th February 2020 be accepted as a true record of the proceedings. **Agreed**

Note ***The Chairman had stated at the beginning of the meeting that the Agenda would be changed around leaving item 5 – ‘Matters arising’ until the end of the ‘open session’ but for continuity of Minutes it is placed here in original order***

F&GP/19/130 MATTERS ARISING AND ACTIONS

130.1 F&GP/19/19.3 Bus Shelter Lease to be reviewed by working party (Cllrs Campbell & Goldsmith) – **Ongoing** **CLERK**

130.2 F&GP/19/43.17 Emergency plan to be reviewed by Clerk - **Actioned**

130.3 F&GP/19/44.3 Clerk to revisit Swimming pool payments on next Agenda – **See item 132.5**

130.4 F&GP/19/19.6 Financial Matters training for Councillors, further dates required – **CLERK**
Ongoing – It was suggested this item could wait for a couple of months

130.5 F&GP/19/25.1 Future Newsletter publication to be drafted –
See item 135.1

130.6 F&GP/19/53.1 Clerk to organise FOI panel to convene - **Actioned**

130.7 F&GP/19/55.1 Clerk to obtain Newsletter quotes – **See item 135.2**

130.8 F&GP/19/67.1 Motion on code of conduct to be deferred – **See item 137.1**

130.9 F&GP/19/55.2 Cllr Saunders to write briefing note regards SPC Facebook page
– **See item 135.1**

130.10 F&GP/19/108.15 Clerk to distribute details of licence agreement with WSCC which covers ‘Welcome sign’ - **Actioned**

130.11 F&GP/19/108.16 Clerk to contact Chamber of Trade regarding possible Christmas decoration upgrade – **See item 132.4**

130.12 F&GP/19/108.21 Potential defamation proceedings to be discussed at a future F&GP meeting – **Ongoing**

130.13 F&GP/19/109.4.1 Clerk to amend Bowls Lease to a six-year period. It being agreed subject to solicitor’s confirmation – Cllr Campbell wanted to be copied into letter that goes out to solicitor. – **Ongoing** **CLERK**

130.14 F&GP/19/109.4.2 Clerk to check other leases to prepare for questions including ownership be determined before renewal – **Ongoing** **CLERK**

130.15	F&GP/19/109.7 £200 Festival grant to be sent to Steyning and District partnership – Actioned The Chair also mentioned that connected with this item, that the group passed on a draft possible SPC Logo. The committee asked the Clerk to place on next F&GP Agenda so that proper consideration be given to whether a new Logo required and by whom	CLERK
130.16	F&GP/19/109.8 Premises committee to receive monthly details of hiring's – Actioned	
130.17	F&GP/19/112.1 Conduct protocols meeting on the 19 th Feb to be reported back to F&GP – See item 141.1	
130.18	F&GP/19/112.2 Clerk to report back on staffing vacancy position – See item 134.1	
130.19	F&GP/19/113.3 New requirements for the SPC website to be in place for September 2020 - Ongoing	
130.20	F&GP/19/114.1 Clerk to liaise with Vintage Years to organise payment preference – Clerk reported he had spoken with representative and agreed that two funding requests be sent in , one being at the end of March. Clerk had also asked for and received the Vintage Years accounts. Actioned. Clerk to distribute these to Councillors	CLERK
130.21	F&GP/19/114.2 Youth service contract and MOU to be taken to Full Council for approval – Actioned	
130.22	F&GP/19/114.3 Clerk to communicate support for the HALC letter reference HDC's housing allocation - Actioned	
130.23	F&GP/19/116.2.2 Clerk to send off AGAR to external Auditors including amended Governance statement - Actioned	
130.24	F&GP/19/117.2 Whether residents having option to remain anonymous when asking questions to be discussed by working practices group – Actioned by Clerk with advice received and to be discussed by WPG	WP Group
130.25	F&GP/19/118.1 Street cleaning contract tenders to be opened and a recommendation sought from working party – See item 139.1	
130.26	F&GP/19/119.1 CCTV system coverage to be taken to Full Council for further discussion - Ongoing	CLERK
F&GP/19/131	FINANCE MATTERS	
131.1	The Chairman proposed to defer approving list of payments for February 2020 until the next meeting.	CLERK
131.2	The Chairman proposed to defer agreeing the Income & expenditure report for February until the next meeting.	CLERK
132.3	Funding request from the 'Steyning for Trees' group. The Clerk had sent round supporting papers – The request was predominantly to cover insurance and leaflet promotion for forthcoming event. Cllr Goldsmith proposed, seconded by Cllr Hanson to give a grant of £300 to the 'Steyning for Trees' project subject to the committee agreeing the accounts to be sent around by the Clerk. Agreed	CLERK
132.4	High Street Christmas decorations. Cllr Hanson suggested the Business Chamber get in touch with Storrington Council to discuss. Cllr Campbell proposed, seconded by Cllr S. Sullivan to set up a working party with Cllr Hanson representing the committee to liaise with the Business Chamber to come back to F&GP with recommendations. Agreed. The Clerk to supply Cllr Hanson with email address to organise the meeting.	Cllr Hanson CLERK

132.5	To agree a way forward in consideration of the Steyning Swimming Pool. Cllr Goldsmith proposed, seconded by Cllr G. Sullivan that Cllr Campbell and the Clerk make up a working party and report back to this committee. Agreed	CLERK / <i>Cllr Campbell</i>
132.6	The Clerk reported on Earmarked reserves and General reserves status as per supporting papers. Cllr Goldsmith proposed, seconded by Cllr G. Sullivan to defer this item. Not agreed, 3 For, 4 Against. Cllr Campbell asked for a private tutorial with the Clerk in order to further understand Earmarked reserves	CLERK / <i>Cllr Campbell</i>
132.7	Clerk updated on current expenditure associated with HR Staff project As reported before – Two invoices in – totalling £2,597.69 Gross, £2164.74 Net With apparently another 4.05 hours having been used on our project since the invoices Therefore, current totals £2885.24 Gross, £2308.19 Net of the £5,000 budget.	
132.8	To discuss and agree the delegation of responsibility to the JPYC Team regarding the use (expenditure) of the £700 funds raised via the sale of the Bongo Bus Cllr Goldsmith proposed, seconded by Cllr S. Sullivan to delegate responsibility for Expenditure of the £700 funds to the two SPC councillor representatives acting jointly and in Agreement with each other. Agreed	CLERK <i>Cllrs Saunders & Taylor</i>
F&GP/19/133	ANY ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS REQUIRING FINANCIAL APPROVAL	
133.1	Premises Committee – Meeting dated 3 rd March – None reported	
133.2	Amenities Committee – Meeting dated 25 th February – None reported	
F&GP/19/134	STAFFING MATTERS	
134.1	The Clerk reported on a successful selection process to appoint a Caretaker in regard to the previously vacant position at the Steyning centre.	
134.2	Cllr Campbell proposed, seconded by Cllr Goldsmith to set up of a working party to include Cllrs Young, Norcross and Campbell to look into the delegation arrangements for employing staff and other employment related decisions. Agreed	
F&GP/19/135	SPC PROMOTION / PUBLICATIONS	
135.1	Cllr Saunders updated on possible Facebook page development. Cllr Saunders happy to set it up but wanted other Cllrs to feed in information and help manage it. Cllr Goldsmith proposed, seconded by Cllr Campbell that Cllrs Cree and Saunders set up a working party to discuss and report back at the next meeting, and come up a dummy Face Book page. Agreed	CLERK <i>Cllrs Cree & Saunders</i>
135.2	Cllr Goldsmith to update on possible Newsletter publications. Clerk updated on alternative quotes. Cllr Goldsmith proposed, seconded by Cllr Hanson that the Clerk and Cllr Goldsmith charged with coming back with a developed proposal for what then can be signed off. Agreed	CLERK & <i>Cllr Goldsmith</i>
F&GP/19/136	INFORMATION/CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS	
136.1	HDC's communication ref. Body worn camera consultation. Cllr Campbell proposed, seconded by Cllr Goldsmith that provided the cameras are for the protection of officers and not for recording alleged parking infringements SPC fully supports the proposals and instructs the Clerk to write to HDC to that effect forthwith and to copy in committee members. Agreed	CLERK
136.2	The Clerk raised the possible issues that could be involved concerning the Coronavirus Covid - 19 outbreak. Clerk to circulate updates to Councillors and to carry on managing the Steyning Centre in the light of developments with notices to be put on front doors etc.	CLERK
136.3	Cllr Goldsmith reported on the digital screens and that the contact details for the Wardens are now to be included	

F&GP/19/137
137.1

SPC's POLICY DOCUMENTS

Cllr Campbell stated by way of clarification as to why the six SPC policies under Agenda item 13 were proposed to be discussed in confidential session – and that they had been unanimously agreed by the working practices group on the 19th February. The group comprised Cllrs Lloyd, Campbell, Hanson, Norcross, and Young and with Cllrs Goldsmith and Cree having sent apologies for this meeting. He stated that all the six policies were interrelated and their aim was to provide an alternative to the SPC Code of Conduct and to litigation such as defamation proceedings or the protection from Harassment Act. One policy remaining uncontested, that being the complaints procedure and Cllr Campbell suggested therefore that the policy could be discussed and agreed by this committee in open session. Cllr Campbell therefore **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Goldsmith that the SPC Complaints scheme as recommended by the working practices group be put to Full Council with the recommendation that it be adopted forthwith. **Agreed**

CLERK

137.2

The Clerk advised amendments to the other five policies as per confidential supporting papers. Cllr Campbell reported that he had met with the Monitoring Officer and that she was minded to stop receiving anymore Code of Conduct complaints and that this system wasn't really working at the moment. The policies it was suggested would provide an alternative to the Code of Conduct but were not designed to replace it. The Dignity at Work policy was the over-arching policy which Cllr Campbell stated had always included to cover conduct between Councillors since 2015 and had been endorsed as such by Horsham in 2017. The Clerk advised it was a policy that had not previously covered conduct between Councillors and certainly should not include sanctions being imposed by Councillors on other Councillors as that was the role of the Standards Committee at Horsham. Cllr Campbell reported that the Monitoring Officer had said to him that alternatives to the Code of Conduct should be encouraged. He had forwarded to Committee members and the Clerk an email from the MO that advised that other Councils have policies as alternatives to, but not substitutes for, the Code of Conduct and that provided the suggested policies do not attempt to replace the Code of Conduct then anything that sets out an expectation of good behaviour should be encouraged

137.3

The Clerk stated that he believed that the SPC proposed policies ought not to be discussed in Confidential session but instead should be heard in open session. Cllr Campbell stated that committee would be discussing a history of poor conduct of members that would certainly be of a confidential nature.

F&GP/19/138
138.1

CONFIDENTIAL SESSION

To resolve, under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, in accordance with Standing Orders 3d to exclude the press and public on the grounds that the confidential matters to be discussed would be prejudicial to the public interest. Cllr Goldsmith **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Cree that the meeting be taken into confidential session. **Agreed 5 For {PC, TC, RG, SS, G.Su}, 1 Against {GSa}, 1 Abstained {DH}**

Cllr Campbell suggested a change to running order to deal with the more urgent items first and the meeting was suspended for a 2-minute comfort break. Cllr Campbell declared a personal interest in the next item on the Agenda – Contracts - as he knows the contractor who's bid is being recommended for agreement.

F&GP/19/139
139.1

CONTRACTS

The Street cleaning contract tendering process - Tender documents were received from three interested parties / contractors . Cllrs Campbell and Goldsmith were the F&GP Working Party members who opened the tenders on the 2nd March with the Clerk and Deputy Clerk in attendance. Cllr Goldsmith reported on the process and the reasoning behind their recommendations. Cllr S. Sullivan **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Hanson to agree with the recommendation from the Working party to appoint the new contractor to complete the Steyning street cleaning contract. **Agreed**

CLERK

- F&GP/19/140** **DATA PROTECTION AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION** **CLERK**
140.1 The Clerk spoke of the recent progress made in terms of the Council getting back to FOI requesters in the last two weeks thanks to the FOI panel meeting for the first occasions in this Council's tenure. Two responses have gone out to requesters on Monday, with two others pending. One required the Clerk to complete a check on the tally of FOI's that have been received over the last few years, before a response to being sent. The other response required consensus from this F&GP meeting before it could be sent. Cllr Campbell **proposed, seconded** by Cllr G. Sullivan that the Clerk is instructed to forthwith serve on Cllr Northam the Decision Notice agreed by the FOI panel on 5 March 2020 and to simultaneously upload the same to SPC's FOI page on its website. **Agreed, 5 For {PC, TC, GSu, SSu, RG}, 1 Against {DH}, 1 Abstained {GSa}**. And for the Clerk to send round copy of the email to be sent.
- 140.2** Cllr Campbell **proposed, seconded** by Cllr S. Sullivan that the Clerk is instructed to within 7 days serve [on Mr Walsh] the Decision Notice unanimously agreed by the FOI panel on 25 February 2020, subject to the draft being approved by email vote of the FOI Panel if the numbers in Para.1 of the Decision Notice are changed by more than three in each case. **Agreed, {PC, TC, GSu 5 For, SSu, RG}, 1 Abstained {DH, GSa}** **CLERK**
- F&GP/19/141** **SPC's POLICY DOCUMENTS** (Supporting papers)
141.1 To consider recommendations from the Working Practices Group at a meeting on the 19th February concerning the following policies and to recommend to Full Council:-
- 141.2** **Dignity at Work Policy.** The Clerk advised amendments but these were not agreed by committee. Cllr Campbell **proposed, seconded** by Cllr S. Sullivan that the F&GP committee recommends to Full Council that the Dignity at work policy as drafted on the 19th February is adopted forthwith. **Agreed** **CLERK**
- 141.3** **Email Policy.** The Clerk advised amendments, but these were not agreed by committee. Cllr S. Sullivan **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Campbell that the F&GP committee recommends to Full Council that the Email policy as drafted on the 19th February is adopted forthwith. **Agreed 6 For, 1 Against** **CLERK**
- At this point the Chairman closed the meeting as time had run out so decisions on the other policies was deferred*
- F&GP/19/142** **DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 14th April 2020 @7.30pm.**

The Chairman closed the meeting at 10.02pm

Signed Date 14th April 2020

Chairman of F&GP Committee

This meeting can be heard in audio at the following web site link:

<https://archive.org/details/20200310steyningparishcouncilfinanceandgeneralpurposesmeeting>