



Minutes of the Finance and General Policy Committee meeting of Bearsted Parish Council held at Madginford Hall, Egremont Road on Tuesday 7th November 2023 at 7:30 pm

Present:

Cllr Richard Ash MBE
Cllr Denis Spooner
Cllr Carolyn Smith

Also, in attendance was the Clerk Joanne Upton.

The Clerk took the Chair.

Reports from members of the public.

There were no reports from members of the public.

1. Declarations of intention to record.

The Clerk declared that the meeting would be recorded for minuting purposes.

2. Apologies and absence.

Apologies were received and duly noted for Cllr's C. English, D. Hall and F. Jagger.

3. Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying.

None declared.

4. To elect a new committee Chairperson

Cllr Ash nominated Cllr Spooner as Chairman for this meeting only, which was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.

Cllr Spooner took the Chair.

5. To elect a new committee Vice Chairperson

The Committee resolved to defer this item to the next meeting,

6. Signing of the Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes from 5th September 2023 were agreed as a true record and duly signed.

7. Clerks Report

The Clerk advised the Committee that the office has spoken to MBC to confirm that the Council Tax paid for the Church Lane car park has been paid since 1990 and the Business Rates department could not explain why BPC thought that they would not be charged for this car park. The Committee agreed to accept the decision as no other evidence available to indicate that this car park should be exempt from charges. The Clerk also explained the bank charges incurred on the current account.

8. Finance (Accounts and Audit Regulation 2011/817)

a) Grants & Donations: The Clerk confirmed that she had recently attended the Cygnet course via a different company and had not been approached in support of this application. Cllr Ash proposed to approve the £500 donation to Beam, this was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.

b) Ratify payments:

- i) Cllr Ash proposed to accept the £75 cost to repair the Hog Hill noticeboard and secure the post on the Green, this was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.
- ii) Cllr Ash proposed to accept the £373.60 payment to Clear for cancellation insurance for the Christmas Market and increased Public Liability. This was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.

- iii) Cllr Ash proposed to accept the £693.39 payment for the PPL & PRS licences for Fireworks and the Christmas Market. This was seconded by Cllr Spooner and resolved with all in favour.
- c) To authorise November payments: Cllr Smith proposed to accept the payments, this was seconded by Cllr Ash and resolved with all in favour.
- d) To consider finance reports: Cllr Ash noted that the contribution from Detling Parish for the Community Bus Service has not yet been received and requested the office contact the Clerk. Cllr Ash requested that CIL Funds is added to the Full Council agenda to vote on attributing these funds to the Traffic Committee budget.

ACTION: CLERK

- e) To consider the balances of accounts: The Clerk advised we are still waiting on bank statements.
- f) To consider a request for Cllr expenses towards training: The Clerk confirmed that there is no legislation allowing Councillors to be paid for time spent training. Cllr Spooner confirmed that Councillors can be paid for expenses travelling to and from training but not for the hours spent. Cllr Ash proposed to reject the request for a training allowance, except for travel expenses. This was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.

9. Review policies for updating (LGA 1972 s.111)

- a) Scheme of Delegation
The Committee agreed to defer this item to Full Council as the final document is still being completed.

ACTION: CLLR ENGLISH

- b) Civility & Respect Policy
Cllr Spooner proposed to adopt the policy subject to formatting and correcting grammar, this will replace the previous Harassment and Bullying Policy. This was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.
- c) Accessibility Statement
Cllr Spooner proposed to adopt the policy, which was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.
- d) Privacy Statement
The Clerk recommended deferring this item, to allow the office to research up to date legislation and ensure the policy is compliant. Cllr Spooner proposed to accept the recommendation of the Clerk, which was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.

ACTION: CLERK

- e) Grants & Donations
Cllr Spooner proposed to adopt the policy, which was seconded by Cllr Ash and resolved with all in favour.
- f) Harassment & Bullying
This policy is being replaced by the Civility and Respect Policy.
- g) Memorial Bench Policy
Cllr Ash proposed to adopt the policy, which was seconded by Cllr Spooner and resolved with all in favour.
- h) Record Management & Retention Policy
The Clerk recommended that this item be deferred for the office to check if there have been any changes in legislation. Cllr Spooner proposed to accept the Clerks recommendation, this was seconded by Cllr Ash and resolved with all in favour.

ACTION: CLERK

- i) Recording Meeting Policy
Cllr Ash proposed to adopt the policy, which was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.
- j) Reserves Policy
Cllr Spooner questioned the percentage or amount the Council is permitted to keep in reserves, and proposed we defer this item for further clarification. This was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.

ACTION: CLERK

Cllr Ash queried the system used for our policies, the Clerk confirmed the office are working on reorganising the system and could look at categorising rather than numbering policies.

10. Review of Policies

The Committee felt it was unnecessary to pay for a company to review our policies but as this issue was raised by Cllr Jagger, this item will be deferred until the next meeting.

11. Bank Accounts

Cllr Smith confirmed that Cllr Jagger and herself are still looking into alternatives and will report back to the next meeting.

ACTION: CLLR's JAGGER & SMITH

12. Review of Leases

The Clerk reported the leases had been sent to Outset for review, the Clerk will report back once the work has been completed.

ACTION: CLLR HALL / CLERK

13. Office Extension

The Clerk had provided a list of requirements and Cllr Ash had supplied a possible design for the extension. The Clerk reported that KCC had been contacted and confirmed that they would be open to considering an extension. Cllr Spooner will approach a local resident about providing an initial drawing and estimate for the works. The Council can then discuss with KCC and investigate costs for detailed drawings before applying for planning permission.

ACTION: CLLR SPOONER

14. Copies of Correspondence to Parish Office

The Clerk raised concerns about the storage of correspondence from Councillors to residents, contractors and other government departments, especially once a Councillor leaves the Council. Cllr Smith suggested a secure location on the website or a shared file for Councillors to download important documents or correspondence too. It was agreed the office will investigate options and report back to the Committee.

ACTION: OFFICE

15. Future Agenda items

Scheme of Delegation
Civility & Respect Model Councillor and Officer Protocol
Review of Policies
Review of Leases
Bank Accounts
Office extension
Copies of correspondence to office
Policies

16. Next meeting: 9th January 2023.

With no further business to transact, the meeting closed at 20:45 hrs

Signed..... Date.....