



Minutes of the Finance and General Policy Committee meeting of Bearsted Parish Council held at Madginford Hall, Egremont Road on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 7:30 pm

Present:

Cllr Richard Ash MBE	Cllr Frank Jagger
Cllr Clive English	Cllr Carolyn Smith
Cllr David Hall	Cllr Denis Spooner

Also, in attendance was the Clerk Joanne Upton and visiting member Cllr Val Springett.

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.**

There were none.

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

None declared.

**4. To elect a new committee Chairperson**

Cllr Smith nominated Cllr Hall as Chairman, which was seconded by Cllr Ash and resolved with all in favour.

Cllr Hall took the Chair.

**5. To elect a new committee Vice Chairperson**

Cllr English nominated Cllr Spooner as Vice Chair, which was seconded by Cllr Hall and resolved with all in favour.

**6. To resolve to go into closed session and to exclude the press and public at item 16, Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 in accordance with standing order 10 (xi) Land Purchase**

Cllr Hall proposed to move this item to after the Clerks report, this was seconded by Cllr English and resolved with all in favour.

**7. Signing of the Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes from 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were agreed as a true record and duly signed.

**8. Clerks Report**

The Clerk advised the Committee that the office has spoken to the Validation department regarding the Council Tax for the Church Lane car park but are still waiting to hear back.

**Closed Session**

Land purchase.

**9. Finance (Accounts and Audit Regulation 2011/817)**

- a) Grants & Donations: None.
- b) Ratify payments:
  - i) Cllr Hall proposed to accept the renewal quote with Chris Knott Insurance for allotment insurance, which was seconded by Cllr English and resolved with all in favour.
  - ii) The Clerk explained there may be potential storage available at the newly built shed near the Elizabeth Harvie Field, but we are waiting on a response from the developer and Roseacre Raiders to establish ownership and who is responsible for insurance and to check if there is space to store our playscheme equipment. Cllr Jagger suggested we further investigate before committing to purchasing a new shed. A meeting to be arranged with Roseacre Raiders.

**ACTION: CLERK**

- c) Consider payments:
  - i) Cllr Hall proposed to accept the Warings quote to undertake work to repair damage to the Green, this was seconded by Cllr English and resolved with all in favour.
  - ii) Cllr Ash proposed to accept the National Allotment Association membership renewal, this was seconded by Cllr Jagger and resolved with all in favour.
- d) To authorise January payments: Cllr Ash raised a query on a payment to a previous member of staff, the Clerk explained the reason and calculations for the payment. Cllr Hall proposed to accept the payments, this was seconded by Cllr Ash and resolved with all in favour.
- e) To consider finance reports: Cllr Hall proposed to accept the finance reports, this was seconded by Cllr Spooner and resolved with all in favour.
- f) To consider the balances of accounts: Cllr Hall proposed to accept the balance of accounts, which was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.
- g) To consider the Precept for 2024-25: Cllr Ash proposed to maintain the current Band D charge ensuring no increase to residents. This was seconded by Cllr Hall and resolved with all in favour. This will be published in the next newsletter.

**ACTION: OFFICE**

**10. Review policies for updating (LGA 1972 s.111)**

- a) Financial Regulations:

Cllr Jagger requested we leave this policy to be discussed at the end of item 10.
- b) Complaints policy:

Cllr Spooner proposed to adopt the policy, which was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.
- c) Record Management Policy:

Cllr Hall noted Parish Council should have capital letters and proposed to adopt the policy with this amendment, this was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.
- d) Debit card policy:

Cllr Jagger requested this policy be discussed with item 10a.
- e) Councillor Co-option policy:

Cllr English proposed to adopt the policy, which was seconded by Cllr Spooner and resolved with all in favour. Cllr English confirmed this policy does not need to be reviewed unless there is a change in legislation.
- f) Resilience Plan:

The Clerk confirmed this needs more work and is working with MBC on updating it. Cllr Ash queried if Bearsted is likely to be affected by flooding, Cllr Jagger noted that flooding could occur due to sewage leaks. Cllr English advised he is attending training next week on behalf of Detling Parish Council and would report back. It was agreed to defer this item.

**ACTION: CLERK / CLLR ENGLISH**

g) Strategy for Investment:

The Clerk explained it is listed as a policy to review but cannot find a previous policy document. The Committee agreed that this should be covered in the Financial Regulations Policy.

h) Reserves Policy:

Cllr Hall proposed to adopt the policy, which was seconded by Cllr English and resolved with all in favour.

i) Privacy Statement:

The Clerk advised this policy needs more work as under advice it does not provide enough detail. The Committee agreed to defer this item.

**ACTION: CLERK**

j) Mission Statement:

The various amendments suggested by Councillors were discussed and those that were agreed would be included. Cllr Hall proposed to adopt the policy with the agreed amendments, this was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.

**ACTION: CLLR HALL**

Items a, d & g: Cllr Jagger noted that the current Financial Regulations policy is not fit for purpose, it has clearly been copied from elsewhere and tweaked for Bearsted Parish Council. Cllr English suggested approaching NALC for a template and rewriting the entire document, this can include the debit card and strategy for investment policies.

**ACTION: CLLR ENGLISH / CLERK**

## 11. Review of Leases

Cllr Hall advised the work undertaken by Outset to summarise the leases was extremely useful. Cllr Hall asked the Committee if they would require all leases to be rewritten, the Committee agreed this does not need to be done, unless the terms of the lease need to be negotiated.

The Bowls club lease is unsigned, BPC will arrange a meeting to resolve this issue.

Various emails and the work undertaken by Outset confirms that the Cricket Club own the pavilion all the time they hold the lease, the lease confirms that they are entitled to remove the building should the lease come to an end. The Committee confirmed that the Clerk can put this in writing to the Cricket Club. Cllr Jagger noted that the license for the playing area does not define the boundary area and this should be included in any review.

The Committee noted that a meeting would be needed with the Tennis Club to discuss the construction work for the new tennis courts and issues relating to the lease. The Clerk will write to the Tennis Club to request an updated copy of the constitution.

**ACTION: CLLR HALL / CLERK**

## 12. Review of Policies

Cllr Jagger raised concern that with so many policies it is difficult for Councillors to have knowledge of all of the content. Cllr English advised it would be unlikely to find one private sector company that could undertake a review of all Council policies, local government differs to private sector regulations. Cllr Smith noted that NALC should be able to provide a list of policies a Parish Council should have and Cllr English confirmed we should approach KALC for guidance.

**ACTION: CLERK**

## 13. Bank Accounts

The Clerk reported there is further work to be done to add signatories to the various bank accounts. Cllr Jagger and Cllr Smith will continue to look into alternative bank account options. This item will be deferred until the next meeting.

**ACTION: CLLR's JAGGER & SMITH / CLERK**

Cllr Jagger left the meeting at 21.15hrs.

**14. Office Extension**

The Clerk advised that the Outset report on leases identified that the Landlord owns the buildings, further work is required to establish ownership. The Committee reviewed three quotations for architects' drawings, Cllr Hall proposed to give delegated authority to the Clerk to source a suitable architect up to the cost of £1650.00, which was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.

**ACTION: CLERK**

**15. Future Agenda items**

- Review of Leases
- Bank Accounts
- Office extension
- Copies of correspondence to office
- Policies

**16. Next meeting: 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024.**

With no further business to transact, the meeting closed at 21:22 hrs

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