

POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

6 September 2012

Chandler's Ford UR Church, Kings Road, Chandler's Ford

7.00 pm – 8.48 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Olson (Chairman); Councillors Mrs Atkinson, Boyes, Broadhurst, Davidovitz, Mrs Gault, Ms Grajewski, Hughes and Pragnell

APOLOGIES; Cllr Mrs Roberts

In attendance – Cllr Streeter and Stephen Mursell, Parish Clerk.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Mrs Atkinson, Hughes and Olson stated a declaration of interest in respect of agenda 10 as at least one of the solicitors mentioned were either known to them personally or had previously been party to a professional relationship with the solicitor. It was agreed that all three Councillors would leave the room whilst the matter was discussed.

Cllr Grajewski also stated a declaration of interest in respect of agenda 7 but would not leave the room.

2. MINUTES

It was agreed that the minutes for the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 27 June 2012 be signed by the Chairman as an accurate record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising not already covered by the agenda items.

3. DIAMOND JUBILEE EVENTS UPDATE

The Chairman advised members that following the prize giving event, the final account for Chandler's Ford in Bloom competition was attached. Members were asked to consider a £25.00 donation to the National Gardens Scheme in recognition of the judge allowing her garden to be used for the prize giving event. Members were requested to note the final account for the competition.

The Chairman also requested members to consider whether the competition could be organised again next year with the expectation that more businesses and residents would take part with improved publicity for the competition.

It was AGREED that:

- 1) A donation of £25.00 be made to National Garden Scheme in recognition of the judge providing her garden for the prize giving
- 2) The final accounts for the competition were noted
- 3) The Chandler's Ford in Bloom competition would be organised by the Parish Council again in 2013

4. GRANTS

The Chairman reported that the additional information requested of Victim Support had been received and was attached as an appendix to the agenda. Cllr Atkinson reported the balance sheet information requested for Victim Support, Hampshire was not helpful. Information obtained through the Charities Commission website provided members with assurance that the organisation was on a sound financial footing.

Members acknowledged that by considering this grant it would benefit local individuals and families within the parish, who had been the victims of crime and that there was evidence of 257 individuals being assisted within the Chandler's Ford area in the last year.

It was AGREED that:

- 1) The Parish Council would make a grant of £200.00 to Victim Support, Hampshire

5. NEWSLETTER

The Clerk updated members with progress on the newsletter and reminded members that a working party of three members had been established to consider the editorial content and advertising requirements for the newsletter.

The Clerk advised members that he had undertaken some additional research to identify a provider who could co-ordinate the content of a newsletter and organise the printing and distribution of the newsletter. An indicative price for the collation of a four page A4 newsletter was £173 for each addition and although not confirmed the Clerk indicated that distribution could cost in the region of £20 for each 1,000 delivered.

Members were of the opinion that the Parish Council should have a newsletter and progress should be made as soon as possible with the first edition being produced by December for distribution in January. Members noted that on these figures each newsletter delivered would cost only 4p for each edition, which could potentially be offset by advertising charges once the first edition was published and potential advertisers were found.

Members considered that additional copies of the newsletter should be produced in order that they may be left in the library, doctor's surgeries and other suitable places.

It was AGREED that:

- 1)The Clerk would obtain three estimates for the collation, printing and distribution of a Parish newsletter
- 2) The first edition of a newsletter should be available for distribution early in January 2013
- 3) Advertising should be sought after the first edition has been produced to provide potential advertisers with evidence of the quality of the newsletter
- 4) The Clerk should seek volunteers to assist with the production of a newsletter by promoting the volunteering opportunity through One Community

6. PARISH OFFICE MOVE

The Clerk updated members on progress with the Parish Office move and advised members that as the Hampshire Association of Local Council had decided to break their current lease at 31 October 2012 rather than the previously agreed date of 31 December 2012, the office move has been brought forward. The Clerk has brought forward actions to ensure a smooth transition of the Parish Office to the Fryern Pavilion and the first action has been to place an order for the move of the telephone and broadband line with an anticipated installation by the end of October.

Members were advised that a further consequence of the office move would be to consider the lease of a photocopier and from initial discussions with a reputable local company a quote for approximately £140.00 monthly had been received.

Cllr Gault declared an interest in respect of the procurement of photocopying machines, however she declared that she would remain in the room as she may be able to provide input to the discussion but would not take part in any decision reached. Cllr Gault stated that she would be able to assess the merits of the proposal to lease the photocopier in respect of the specifications and contract details once it had been received in writing.

The Clerk also advised members that consideration should be given to the purchase of an office safe to allow for the permanent safe keeping of valuable items and confidential documents.

Members felt that the Parish Clerk should provide a more detailed breakdown of the anticipated costs in the Parish Office relocation before any decision could be made.

It was AGREED that:

- 1)The Clerk would forward details of the proposed lease agreement for a new photocopier to Cllr Gault for comment
- 2)The Clerk would provide a more detailed breakdown of the relocation cost of the

Parish Office to the next Parish Council meeting on 13 September 2012. The costs to be broken down in to capital and revenue costs

3) The Parish Clerk would also determine whether the Parish Council insurance cover would need to be reviewed in the light of the proposed Parish Office relocation.

7. ASSET TRANSFER

The Chairman stated that following a recommendation made by the Asset Transfer Team this Committee was requested to consider and agree to the transfer of the three recreation grounds to the ownership of the Parish Council with effect from April 2013.

Cllr Boyes tabled a paper by way of summary of discussions with officers of Eastleigh Borough Council and it was stated that the officers had requested that the Parish council should also at this stage consider the transfer of the children's play areas within the curtilage of the three recreation grounds, together with the recreations grounds, rather than consider taking over all children's play areas a later date.

Cllr Pragnell stated that the Parish Council had already taken the decision not to transfer the children's play areas. However it was pointed out that this decision had been taken when the proposal had been in respect of the transfer of all the children's play areas in the Parish, not just those within the cartilage of the three recreation grounds under consideration for transfer to the Parish. It was confirmed that the Parish Council would only consider this asset transfer at its next meeting on 13 September 2012 following all committees having had the opportunity to discuss the matter. Any decision taken would however be in principal whilst due diligence investigations and legal enquiries were proceeding.

Members wished to see the final breakdown of the anticipated costs to the Parish Council of maintaining the recreation grounds and requested that this summary information is provided to the Parish council at the meeting on 13 September 2012.

It was AGREED that:

1)Cllr Atkinson would provide a breakdown of the costs of maintaining the recreation grounds to the Parish Council in the first year of operation and this information would be provided to members ahead of the Parish Council meeting on 13 September 2012

Members considered the recommendation to agree the transfer of the recreation grounds to the ownership of the Parish Council and to reflect the fact that due diligence in these transactions was on-going it was decided that the words "in principal" should be inserted in the proposition.

It was AGREED that:

1)This Committee would agree in principal to the transfer of the recreation grounds at

Hiltingbury, Fryern and Pennine Way and other assets within the curtilage of such recreation grounds subject to the continuation of the due diligence process and that this may include the children's play areas on the assets

7. LEGAL COSTS FOR THE ASSET TRANSFERS

Cllrs Atkinson, Hughes and Olson left the room and Cllr Grajewski took the chair.

The Clerk presented the paper that was attached to the agenda and advised members that all three solicitors had been provided with an identical brief as to the Parish Council's intention to transfer the assets to their ownership.

The solicitors identified were all local companies and selected on the basis of being conveniently located for discussions on the legal transactions. All three solicitors were requested to provide a detailed breakdown of the costs and their replies had been summarised in this paper.

Members considered that it was appropriate to only consider solicitor 2 and solicitor 3, however members felt they were unable to recommend the appointment of one company above the other until both solicitors had been able to provide a detailed breakdown of all their costs and charges in these transactions. In addition members requested that the Clerk ascertain from both solicitors their experience in handling such transactions with local councils.

It was AGREED that:

1)The Clerk will provide this information to members at the next Parish Council meeting on 13 September 2012

8. FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Clerk introduced his report however advised members that the account balances were incorrect and the report would need to be revised.

It was AGREED that:

1) The Clerk would amend the financial update and circulate to all members

9. CHEQUE SIGNING PROCEDURES

The Clerk advised members that it was the government's intention to abolish payments by cheque from 2018 and this presented difficulties to Parish Councils where payment is normally made by cheque for goods and services. The Clerk advised members that the current Local Government Act 1972 did not allow for electronic payment systems to

be used by Parish Council and therefore any Council making payments by such method could be challenged.

The Clerk advised that payments may however be considered by Direct Debit and in the case of these Parish Council payments to BT for phone and broadband access are currently made on this basis. The government is however considering introducing regulations to permit electronic payments and the Clerk would update members when such plans are finalised.

10. PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The Clerk advised members that there had been much discussion between the Borough Council and Parish Councils who had held elections in 2012 over the high level of charges and as this Parish Council will hold elections in 2014 it was essential that adequate contingency was set aside for the cost of such elections and any bye-election ahead of that date.

The Clerk therefore had held discussions with an officer of Legal and Democratic Services to determine a more accurate figure for the Parish Council elections that would form a contingency in the accounts. Following such discussions it was determined that an amount of £25,000 should be set aside for the 2014 elections and should a bye-election need to be held it is estimated that an amount of up to £6,000 should be set aside depending on the need for polling stations.

It was AGREED that:

1)The Parish Council would take account of the estimated election costs when setting the budget for 2013/14

11. POLICY REVIEWS

The Clerk advised members that following his on-going review of policies and procedures the latest batch of these documents were attached for members to consider. Members considered all the policies and procedures in turn and made suggestions as to certain amendments and inclusions.

It was AGREED that:

1)Subject to such amendments and inclusions the following policies and procedures were accepted:

- * Press and Media Policy
- * IT Policy
- * Health and Safety Policy
- * Data Protection Policy
- * Communications Policy
- * Ethical statement

2)Such policies and procedures should be published on the Parish Council website

12. DATE AND BUSINESS OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for 17 October 2012 at Kings Road United Reform Church

The following agenda items were proposed:

Asset Transfer
Report on office move
Review of Parish Council policies and procedures
Community Grants
Parish Newsletter