

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – 26 JANUARY 2012

Present: Councillor N Webster (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs M Belsey (Vice Chairman)
Councillor J Saul (Town Mayor)
Councillor Mrs Beckford
Councillors O'Brien, Osborne, Sillitoe, Whittaker and Wyan

Also present: Councillors Mainstone, Favor and Sweatman

Officers present: Town Clerk and Mr Barry Male, Responsible Finance Officer.

278 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There being no public present, Members moved on to the next item of business at 7.45 pm.

279 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors Mrs Bennett, Mrs Brunsdon and Hodges.

280 MINUTES

The Chairman gave the following update from the previous minutes.

Minute 222: the plaque has been ordered and is awaited. Mr Piddlesdon was very happy with the decision and sends his thanks to the Committee.

Minute 224: having obtained a second quote Officers who are to be involved in the ongoing editorial of this site, considered the set up and ongoing cost, speculative design and layout and awarded the contract to Chris Wall Creative. A first meeting with the designer and the editorial panel has taken place. Agreements are now being drawn up as to the arrangements for the running of the site and the role of the board and its membership. It is hoped that the website will be launched in April.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2011 having been previously circulated, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

281 DECLARATIONS OF PREJUDICIAL AND PERSONAL INTEREST

- * Councillors Mrs Belsey, Mainstone, O'Brien, Sweatman and Webster declared personal interests in all matters on the agenda that relate to Mid Sussex District Council, in their capacity as elected Members of that Authority.
- * Councillor O'Brien disclosed a personal interest in any matters on the agenda that referred to Mid Sussex District Council and West Sussex County Council as elected members of those Authorities.
- * Councillor Mainstone disclosed a personal interest in agenda item 12 as a former employee of Imberhorne School.
- * Councillor Mainstone disclosed a personal interest as an occasional hirer of the Old Court House.

282 ACCOUNTS FOR NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2011 (Min 215 24.11.11)

Mr Male introduced the accounts. There were no questions from the Committee and it was

RESOLVED: That the accounts for the following months as set out in the schedule submitted be approved and confirmed:

	<u>Total</u> <u>Payments</u>	<u>Imprest</u>
	£	£
Nov 2011	112,128.95	2,177.20
Dec 2011	77,118.19	629.47
	<u>189,247.14</u>	<u>2,806.67</u>

283 TOWN COUNCIL FINANCES – POSITION STATEMENT (Min 216 24.11.11)

Mr Male introduced the report by stating that finances were within budget and some under spend, as in comparison to this time last year, was due to under spend on capital projects. The item was noted.

284 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Min 217 24.11.11)

Mr Male advised that sickness rates for staff remain very good and that invoice payments were as close to 100% as could be possible. The item was noted.

285 TO RECEIVE RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES (Min 218 24.11.11)

There were no recommendations from previous Committee meetings other than in respect of the revenue estimates, which would be dealt with later in the meeting.

286 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES (Min 219 24.11.11)

The reports from Members representing the Town Council on outside bodies were noted, including an additional one, from Councillor Whittaker regarding the East Grinstead Business Association that was circulated separately. A report was also table by Councillor Osborne in respect of the Friends of the East Grinstead Museum, which was read by the Chairman as follows:-

“The committee is small and looking for additional members, but having said that they are active and successful at fundraising. They recently raised approximately £500 with a Race Night at Imberhorne School and on Friday 2nd March there is a concert at Chequer Mead, which will hopefully raise in excess of a four figure sum.”

The Chairman reminded Councillors that outside body reports were received twice a year. Reports concerning all outside bodies would be expected for the next cycle of meetings as a final year report and Members were advised they should be submitted to the Town Clerk by 10th March.

A question concerning the report submitted by Councillor Mrs Belsey in respect of the War Memorial Company as to whether the provision of children’s toilets affected the Town Council was responded to that the provision would be situated by the Pavilion or near the pond and did not refer to the Town Council’s East Court facilities.

The reports were all noted.

287 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKING PARTY (Min 220 24.11.11)

Councillor Mrs Brunsdon's report was referred to and the Chairman additionally proposed that the third group concerning sustainability should be disbanded as the subject matter now appeared to excessively cross over with the other two groups and, to avoid duplication, subsuming the work of sustainability into the remaining two groups would speed the process. This was unanimously agreed.

Reference was made to the letter received from Garry Marsh at Mid Sussex District Council asking that possible housing sites and numbers of houses be submitted to the District Council by 30th March 2012 and whether the Town Council would be able to meet this deadline. The Chairman responded that whilst it was hoped that the deadline would be met it was difficult because these numbers and sites needed to be evidentially based and should therefore only be submitted when the information is available.

The Chairman further stated that the Town Council did not wish to abdicate the identification of these sites to Mid Sussex District Council. However, the Town Council also needed to ensure that appropriate sites and numbers were identified.

The Chairman advised that Councillor Mrs Beckford had stood down from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. He asked if she would please update the Chairman of the Group on any work that had been completed within the past six weeks and further advised that her replacement on the Group was now being considered and these discussions included her dedicated substitute, Councillor Mainstone.

The report was noted.

288 CONSULTATION WORKING PARTY (Min 221 24.11.11)

It was queried as to whether the Town Council had sent a response to Mid Sussex District Council's Housing Strategy. The closing date had been November 2011. Members were unsure as to whether this had been considered by the Consultation Group or a response submitted and the Town Clerk was asked to determine whether a response had been submitted and, if so, to re-circulate to Members.

The remainder of the report was noted.

289 YOUTH SPORTS INITIATIVE GRANTS (Min 288 27.1.11)

The Chairman briefly explained the applications that had been received. It was noted that the report did not state that the Meads Football Club had made an application, but this was confirmed as having been submitted.

The grants, as recommended by the Leader of Council, were then approved.

RESOLVED: To award grants in the 2012/2013 financial year to the following Clubs as follows:-

East Grinstead Cricket Club	£250
East Grinstead Swimming Club	£300
Imberhorne School (being the maximum from this grant allocation)	£500
East Grinstead Meads Football Club	£500

290 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES (Min 295 27.1.11)

The Chairman outlined the report and reminded Members that they had requested a report to consider a child and dependant allowance be included in the Members' Allowances Scheme. Members made comments in support of this inclusion stating that it would encourage prospective councillors with families and other dependant responsibilities to stand as candidates for Town Council membership.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: That a child and dependant allowance be included as part of the Members' Allowances Scheme with effect from April 2012.

The Chairman then tabled a supplementary report stating that whilst dealing with Members Allowances it would be appropriate at this time, to consider the level of members allowance for 2012/13 and avoid the need to have a report to the next cycle of meetings.

The Town Council is required to set annual allowances that Members may claim. It was noted that the current allowance was agreed in January 2011 following an independent report by the Mid Sussex District Council Members' Allowances Panel. This Panel was no longer meeting on an annual basis and therefore there was no new recommendation for the Town Council to consider. Councillors spoke in support of the recommendation that the Councillors Allowance should remain at the same level as the previous year, although it was suggested that future consideration of the Town Mayor's Allowance may need to be given to ensure that this is adequate. The Town Mayor incurred a great deal of expense during his/her year of office.

It was also advised that, as a matter for future consideration, the extra mileage commitment of Members of the Planning Committee should be looked at. Currently mileage allowance is only awarded for approved outside of the Town travel, while the Members of Planning Committee, when visiting application sites, undertake a greater level of mileage inside the Town than other Committee Members.

It was clarified that 15 out of 18 Councillors claimed their allowance in 2011/12 and it was further commented that it may appear odd that the Town Council had resolved an allowance amount at £1 below the recommendation of Mid Sussex District Council in the previous year, but it was explained that the previous administration had felt strongly that the process of the District Council recommending an award to parish and town councillors was inappropriate.

RESOLVED: (i) That the allowance to be claimed by an East Grinstead Town Councillor for 2012/2013 would remain at £1,030;

(ii) The Town Mayor's allowance for the East Grinstead Town Mayor for 2012/13 would remain at £1,270, and

(iii) That approved mileage would be paid at HMRC rates.

291 REVENUE BUDGET 2012/2013 (Min 297 27.1.11)

The Chairman introduced the revenue estimates 2012/2013 and firstly explained the budget cost centres that apply to the Finance & General Purposes Committee. He then further advised that the previous Standing Committee had considered their cost centres and made no alterations. The Committee then considered the revenue estimates as a whole, including the capital scheme and the recommended precept to

be levied on Mid Sussex District Council for 2012/2013. It was

- RESOLVED:
- (i) To accept the Planning Committee's recommendation (Min. 254 9.1.12), the Public Services Committee's recommendation (Min. 265 12.1.12 and the Amenities & Tourism Committee's recommendation (Min. 277 of 19.1.12) that there are no alterations to be considered for the revenue estimates as set out in the separately circulated booklet;
 - (ii) To approve the revenue estimates for 2012/2013 in respect of Finance & General Purposes Committee, namely cost centres 100, 200, 400 and 1100 without alteration;
 - (iii) To recommend the revenue estimates 2012/2013 to the meeting of the Town Council on 6th February 2012 to become the Town Council's budget for 2012/2013 financial year;
 - (iv) That the Town Council's capital programme for 2012/2013 be laid down as in the draft budget booklet;
 - (v) To approve that any capital schemes not completed in 2011/2012 including any former years' figures, be automatically carried forward to 2012/2013 and for an adjustment to be earmarked as set out in the draft budget booklet;
 - (vi) That the Town Council's estimate of £992,784 and estimated income of £276,525 in the 2012/2013 financial year be approved, resulting in a net cost to the Town Council of £716,259, and
 - (vii) That Council, on 6th February 2012, be requested to approve a precept for the 2012/2013 financial year, which the Committee recommends should be set at £716,259 based on the known tax base of 10902.3 therefore not requiring any transfer from reserves.

During the vote on all of the above resolutions Councillor Mrs Beckford wished her vote of abstention to be recorded.

The Councillors wished to record their thanks to the staff and the Chairman for the production of the budget papers, which was clear and well presented.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 8.32 p.m.

SIGNED:

CHAIRMAN.