

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – 27 JANUARY 2011

Present: Councillor J Baldwin (Chairman)
Councillor S Barnett (Town Mayor)
Councillor B Mainstone (Deputy Town Mayor)
Councillor Mrs Collins DL
Councillors Banks, Gillbard, Johnson, Marmara, Musk and Reed

283 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There being no members of the public present Members moved on to the next item of business at 7.46 pm.

284 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors Mrs Brunsdon and Mrs Waddingham.

The Town Clerk advised that Councillor Mrs Brunsdon had been appointed by the Conservative Group to the vacant post on Finance & General Purposes Committee but, unfortunately, had an urgent family matter to attend to and had offered her apologies. With regard to Councillor Mrs Waddingham the Town Clerk advised that her mother's funeral had taken place earlier in the day. Members asked that their sympathy be formally recorded.

285 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2010, having been previously circulated, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

286 DECLARATIONS OF PREJUDICIAL AND PERSONAL INTEREST

* Councillors Mainstone and Reed disclosed personal interests in respect of all matters impacting upon West Sussex County Council or Imberhorne School as part-time employees of the County Council and School.

287 ACCOUNTS FOR NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2010 (Min 228 25.11.10)

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 2010	81,897.58	2,382.29
Dec 2010	77,167.30	3,306.57
	<u>15,906.88</u>	<u>5,688.86</u>

288 YOUTH SPORT PARTICIPATION GRANTS 2010/2011 (Min 281 20.1.11)

RESOLVED: That the following Youth Sport Participation Grants be awarded in 2010/2011 financial year:-

	£
Felbridge Badminton Club	250
East Grinstead Cricket Club	250
East Grinstead Meads FC	250
East Grinstead Swimming Club	275
East Grinstead Hockey Club	250
Chartham Park Golf Club	200
East Grinstead Sports Club	250
TS Resolution NTC	275

289 MOUNT NODDY CEMETERY – FEES AND CHARGES 2011/2012 (A & T Min 282 20.1.11)

RESOLVED: That Mount Noddy Cemetery charges for 2011/2012 should be in accordance with those set out in Appendix A attached.

290 TOWN COUNCIL FINANCES – POSITION STATEMENT (Min 229 25.11.10)

Members noted as satisfactory the Town Council's overall financial position statement as at 18th January 2011.

291 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES (Min 230 25.11.10)

Members thanked Councillor Mrs Collins for her written reports in respect of the Neighbourhood Youth Committee and East Grinstead Council for Voluntary Service, which had been included in the Committee papers.

Councillor Mrs Collins paid tribute to the work of Jackie Cooper, the Neighbourhood Youth Worker, who is based at the Wallis Centre, and advised that she had accepted voluntary redundancy from West Sussex County Council and would be leaving on 31st March 2011. New staffing arrangements were being introduced by the Youth Service and there would be a detailed report to the Public Services Committee on 10th March 2011. Committee

RESOLVED: That a letter be sent to Jackie Cooper from the Town Mayor thanking her for her service to the Town's youth community over the past two decades.

292 EAST GRINSTEAD YOUTH COUNCIL (Min 86 24.6.10)

Committee was pleased to welcome Caroline Halpin, the Town Council's Youth Council Co-ordinator, who provided a snapshot of the Youth Council's activities during 2010 and advance information on a number of initiatives planned for the coming year. Members thanked her for her comprehensive written report.

Councillor Marmara said how pleased he was to see the possible future links developing between the Youth Council and the local Fairtrade Committee and welcomed their interest in working in partnership. He advised that the next meeting of the Fairtrade Committee would be Wednesday 2nd February at 8 p.m. at CJs in the High Street and he offered an invitation to Mrs Halpin and a Youth Council representative to that meeting.

Members noted with concern the information provided by Mrs Halpin regarding Outset Youth Action and the drastic establishment cuts that had been necessitated

by the Charity following a severe reduction in grant aid from West Sussex County Council. It was noted that 11 jobs were reducing to 3, which would undoubtedly impact upon the service.

Members were pleased to note Mrs Halpin's comments that the Youth Council has had stability of membership over the past two years and they recognised that this is very much due to her own co-ordinating work. Councillor Gillbard said that a member of the Youth Council, James Joy, had represented East Grinstead along with three other young people, at the music weekend in Sant Feliu de Quixols in 2010 and had been an excellent ambassador. He hoped there might be other opportunities for partnership working between the Youth Council and Town Twinning and he would provide Mrs Halpin's details to Mr Averill.

Councillor Mainstone felt there were opportunities for liaison between the Youth Council and Neighbourhood Panels and it was agreed that Members would bring this to the attention of the Panels so that they could liaise as appropriate with the Youth Council, recognising the need for advance notification of events for which involvement might be requested.

The Town Clerk drew attention to Mrs Halpin's work with Access All Sports and said that there is significant co-ordination between that initiative and the Youth Council and following withdrawal of insurance cover by the County Council it would be helpful for this to be taken up by the Town Council as an extension of the cover that she already has in her Youth Council work. This was duly RESOLVED.

Finally, Members felt it would be helpful for there to be one elected Member of the Town Council to act as the Town Council's link representative with that body in the same way as there is representation on other outside organisations. The Chairman proposed that Councillor Mrs Waddingham be so appointed and that this should be considered by Council at the next meeting on 7th February 2011. This was duly RECOMMENDED.

293 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Min 231 25.11.10)

Details of performance indicators in respect of responsibilities falling under the purview of the Finance & General Purposes Committee for November and December 2010 were noted.

294 THE EQUALITY AT WORK ACT 2010 (Min 234 25.11.10)

The Chairman thanked the Town Council's Officers for the detailed information report regarding the Equality Act 2010. In response to a Member question Mr Male advised that the new legislation brings together much of the existing legislation for which the Town Council already has procedures and policies in place. He said that it is important that the Town Council operates within the law as new provisions are brought in and in this regard the Council will be relying upon its HR Consultants, Peninsula, to advise as appropriate. He said that there is evidence that existing arrangements are working well. He further advised that there is pressure on the National Association of Local Councils to produce a policy template as this would avoid the need for each parish and town council in the country to reinvent the wheel. He hoped that they would be doing this as a matter of priority.

The report was noted.

Members noted the report of the Independent Panel on the Review of Members' Allowances for 2011/2012, a copy of which had been sent to all Members within the Committee papers.

Members expressed great disappointment at the content of the report. They felt it was political in nature and not independent. They appreciated that they had had opportunities to speak to the Panel during 2010, which they had not taken up, but made clear that there had been no suggestion that allowances were to be cut. They felt that this was irrational in a climate of increasing costs and given the increasing role and responsibilities of the Town Council. They did not think that what had been recommended for Mid Sussex District Council was appropriate for parish and town councils and they did not think the report reflected any understanding of the sector. Overall Members felt that the process was flawed and they rejected the content and recommendations of the report. They felt that the Panel had gone outside its brief to pursue central government objectives, which they had done with no evidence base to support. They made clear that the Town Council is not a subsidiary of Mid Sussex District Council and regretted that Town Councillors, who have been prudent, were undertaking more services for less cost, and seeking to take up the slack wherever possible as principal authorities withdraw from discretionary services, were being asked to make a financial sacrifice from an already low base.

Notwithstanding the above Members felt that it would be difficult not to recognise the content of the report and they also recognised that these are difficult economic times. As a principle, however, they were not prepared to accept the recommendation of the Panel for a figure of £1,031 per annum and instead it was

- RESOLVED:
- (i) That the Town Council rejects the recommendation of the Independent Panel on the Review of Members' Allowances 2011/2012 as it is felt that this is political in nature and not independent and reflects no understanding of the role of parish and town councils and neither has there been any evidence produced to justify the proposed cut;
 - (ii) that the elected Members of East Grinstead Town Council who wish to claim an allowance in 2011/2012 may do so at the rate of £1,030 for the year, which represents a decrease of over 5% from 2010/2011, and which is a lesser figure than that recommended by the Panel;
 - (iii) that although the Panel recommends an allowance of £1,545 for the Town Mayor, the Town Council will pay a reduced allowance of £1,270 using powers laid out in the 1972 Local Government Act, and
 - (iv) that pre-approved out of parish travel by elected Councillors will be reimbursed at a car mileage rate in accordance with the HMRC levels.

296 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING (Min 268 21.1.10)

Having noted the Town Clerk's report Members

RECOMMENDED: That the Annual Town Meeting 2011 be rearranged for Tuesday 5th April at 6.30 pm to take place immediately prior to the Planning Committee meeting.

297 REVENUE BUDGET 2011/2012 (Min 267 21.1.10)

Members gave detailed consideration to the revenue estimates previously circulated within one document entitled "Revenue Estimates 2011/2012". They also gave detailed consideration to the recommendations of the other three Programme Committees, all of which confirmed acceptance of the proposed budget figures for their Committees, as set out in the draft budget booklet, without alteration.

- RECOMMENDED:
- (i) That Planning min. 255 10.1.11, Public Services min. 266 13.1.11 and Amenities & Tourism min. 280 20.1.11 be received and approved;
 - (ii) the draft revenue estimates for 2011/2012 in respect of Finance & General Purposes Committee, as delineated in the draft budget book, all be approved;
 - (iii) the approved schedule of revenue estimates for 2011/2012 financial year be as set out in Appendix B attached;
 - (iv) the Town Council's capital programme be set at an amount of £57,500 in 2011/2012 financial year as set out in the draft budget booklet;
 - (v) all approved capital schemes not completed in 2010/2011 financial year, including those from previous years, be automatically carried forward to 2011/2012 financial year and for adjustments to earmarked reserves to be as agreed in the Committee papers;
 - (vi) the Town Council's estimated payments of £973, 648 and estimated income of £254,940 in 2011/2012 financial year be approved resulting in a net cost to the Town Council of £718,708, and
 - (vii) that Council, on 7th February 2011, be requested to approve the precept for 2011/2012 financial year, which the F&GP Committee recommends should be set at £691,600, based on the known tax base of £10,843.80 per £, requiring a transfer of balances of £27,108.

298 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED THAT THE PRESS AND PUBLIC BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING ON GROUNDS THAT PUBLICITY WOULD BE PREJUDICIAL TO THE PUBLIC INTEREST

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

299 ESTABLISHMENT MATTERS (Min 239 25.11.10)

Committee noted the private and confidential report.

The meeting closed at 9.02 p.m.

SIGNED:

CHAIRMAN.