

## HARTING PARISH COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance Committee** held at **7.30 pm** in the **Main Hall** of **Harting Community Hall** on **Thursday 6 July 2017**

**Present:** Tim Bonner (Chairman), Andrew Shaxson, Sheridan Bowman, Hugo Stuttaford, Chris Healey.

In attendance: Trish Walker, Parish Clerk

- 1. Apologies for Absence:** Mr Johnson-Hill and Mrs Bramley
- 2. Declarations of Interest:** None.
- 3. Minutes from Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2016** and with amendments to Items 4, 5 and 6 to read “the Committee agreed to recommend that the Council”, the minutes were signed as a true record.

#### **4. Budget Monitoring**

The budget to date was noted. There are areas such as the Furze Meadow play area where expenditure has been put on hold until the ownership issues and responsibilities are resolved. The budget had initially allowed £7k for this area. There will be a considerable cost relating to the tree survey and subsequent work in South Gardens and the Warren. This survey will be concentrating on the areas with the greatest footfall. Once these costs are known it will be easier to assess the remaining budget.

The play equipment in South Gardens is also due for the annual safety inspection and this may incur expenditure as it is likely that the slide will need some attention. It was noted that £3209.91 had been received from the Youth Club due to its closure, and the funds have been ring fenced to be used in youth work. The Committee agreed that it might be reasonable to consider using this for a specific project such as play equipment. This would need further consideration at a Council meeting if the need arose.

#### **5. Update on Audit**

The RFO confirmed that the Internal Audit by Wallis, White & Co had been completed without any problems. The accounts have now been sent to the external auditors, and should be completed in September.

#### **6. Risk Assessment**

Mr Bonner reported on a recent Health and Safety Course attended by the Clerk that had identified the need for the Parish Council to have a Safety Policy. Organisations with five or more employees have a duty of care to their staff to protect and safeguard them. Although Harting Parish Council has only one direct employee, the Clerk, in the eyes of the law volunteers are classed as employees and, in terms of parish councils, councillors are classed as volunteers.

The members discussed the far reaching impact of a safety policy as it will mean that various risk assessments would be needed to support it. The current risk assessment held by the Council is insufficient for this purpose and will need to be expanded to include:

- Finance (Financial Regulations are in place, but a summary risk assessment would be useful)
- South Gardens (public safety generally & specifically re ponds, play area and trees; also volunteers working in SGs)
- Warren (public safety generally & specifically re trees; also volunteers working in the Warren)
- Public safety in relation to other Council-owned facilities such as the footpath lights
- Events/activities organised by the Council such as litter picking, sign-post repair, volunteer groups in general.

In addition to this the Council will need to request risk assessments from contractors carrying out work on their behalf.

The Community Hall and the War Memorial Playing Field are both managed by Trustees who are responsible for the health and safety, including fire safety, of the facilities. They are both on the Parish Council asset register and so will be required to provide the relevant risk assessments to the Council.

Known groups of users of South Gardens, such as the Digger School and the Scouts, ought to have risk assessments in place which include their use of the areas incorporating the ponds and the play equipment. The Clerk will also request copies of these documents.

The members discussed the means of producing risk assessments and whether professional advice should be sought. However, it was felt that this might be too expensive and that a great amount of time would need to be spent with an advisor to allow them understand the local issues, and that this time might be better spent completing the risk assessments. The members agreed that the Finance Committee would be the most logical co-ordinator for this project, but that individual committees and the clerk should be responsible for producing the risk assessments for their areas.

The subject of risk assessment is vast and it was agreed that the first stages would be as follows:

- i. To produce a Safety Policy (*Dr Bowman to provide a draft policy for consideration*)
- ii. To consider a Risk Strategy
- iii. Request copies of Risk Assessments and Fire Policies from HCH and WMPF (*clerk to request*)
- iv. To try and find examples of risk assessments that might be useful in the context of parish councils (*Chairman to progress*)
- v. To propose headings for the risk assessments for the next Finance Meeting (*Clerk and Chairman to progress*)

- vi. To request Risk Assessments from users of Council facilities (*Clerk to progress*)

It was agreed that the Committee would need to meet in August/early September to enable a proposal to be put forward to the Council meeting in September.

## **7. Insurance Schedules**

It was noted that the Parish Council pays three insurance policies per annum:

- i. Council insurance and public liability – Came & Co, £286.87
- ii. Harting Community Hall – Came & Co, £1095.25
- iii. War Memorial Playing Fields – More Than, £1079.10

The RFO confirmed that the asset register had been sent to Came & Co, and they have confirmed that the Council policy has sufficient cover for its assets. The Village Hall and the Pavilion being covered under the HCH and WMPF insurance respectively.

It was noted that the Council policy includes tree cover, but subject to proper surveys and identification of remedial works to be done.

Having looked through the policy schedules the members felt there were many items included that were not applicable to parish councils, however, it may be that the schedule is generic.

It was agreed that further information was needed with regard to:

- i. Whether volunteers are classed as employees for insurance purposes
- ii. Whether the replacement of the cost of the pavilion is sufficient at £90K
- iii. The clause in the HCH insurance which appears to state that if grants are raised to the value of £50k or more, the insurance might be invalidated.

*Chairman and RFO to discuss these points with the insurers.*

The possibility of combining the three policies was discussed and the following recommendation was made:

*The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council that Came & Co are approached to see if the insurance policies for the Parish Council, WMPF and Harting Community Hall can be combined into one policy to reduce costs.*

## **8. Subscriptions**

There are currently 3 subscriptions paid to WSALC, NALC and SSALC. These subscriptions are necessary to parish councils.

*The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council that they agree that the Subscriptions are retained at the current level.*

**9. Bank Account**

It was noted that the Deposit Account had still not been opened. There was some discussion about the benefit of such an account given the low interest rates currently available. However, it was concluded that a reserve or interest bearing account is preferable from an audit perspective.

*Mr Shaxson to contact the bank with regard to a possible Deposit Account*

**10. Date of Next Meeting:** to be agreed

CHAIRMAN

Date