

STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET PARISH COUNCIL**F&GP**

MINUTES of a meeting of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held at 7.45pm on Wednesday 19 October 2011 in the Council Offices, Crafton Green House, 72 Chapel Hill, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex

PRESENT: Cllr P L Jones (Chairman), Cllrs C Dean, J Hudson, J Loughlin, T Owen, R Rawlinson, J Rich, J Salmon and G Sell

ATTENDING: Mrs R Clifford – Clerk
Cllrs I Evans and W Stiles
1 member of the public

206 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr B Gott.

207 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 13 – Cllr C Dean as Chairman of the Management Committee and Cllr J Rich as UDC rep on the same committee.

208 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 July were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

209 MATTERS ARISING

113 – Crafton Green Project – the working party would next meet on 26 October, but a separate meeting with Chief Inspector Alyson Willson would be held on 4 November.
121 – Health Centre – the Clerk had learned from Tom Sims that reports from the new highway consultants were due shortly and it was Pelham Structures' intention then to submit a planning application. Cllr Sell believed that if there was no significant progress by the year end, the Council should make a public statement.

210 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - None.

211 FINANCE

- a The list of cheques for signature was approved.
- b The income and expenditure account to 30 September would be covered under the budget item later on the agenda.
- c VAT return to 30 September had been submitted.

212 LIGHTING

On-going problems with three lights in Bentfield Causeway and one at the Upper Green which come on and off intermittently – the Council's contractors and the electricity supplier have investigated by no resolution yet. Cllr Sell reported a light out in Station Road. First column in Bentfield Road, on the right hand side entering from Cambridge Road, is also out of lighting.

213 WINDMILL

- a Refurbishment project – Cllr Owen reported that a new piece of metal to prevent the worm from twisting is being formed and should be fitted shortly.
- b Painting still to be completed.
- c General – currently £3,300 overspent in the current year, but some of this may be recouped from the Millers. In response to a query from Cllr Stiles, Cllr Owen confirmed that there is a maintenance schedule in place and inspections are currently carried out by the Millers.

The Chairman reported that once costs of “professional” inspections were available, a discussion would take place between the two Trustees and the Millers to agree the way forward, ie how many inspections would be undertaken, when and by whom. It was believed that the Millers would continue to keep an eye on the Mill, but a millwright’s inspection would be required now that there are more moving parts. Cllr Jones would work with the Clerk and Cllr Owen to produce a report prior to the joint meeting which would hopefully take place on 7 December.

Cllr Dean wondered how the plan to have improved information boards on each floor was progressing? Cllr Owen stated that the banners are in place and provide better information, but further improvements were planned.

214 BONFIRE AND FIREWORK EVENT

No reply has been received from Tesco regarding sponsorship for this event but the Clerk has chased it up. Volunteers required to collect money on the gate – Cllrs Dean, Sell, Hudson, Owen and Evans agreed! Need to be in position at the end of the track (under the Gatehouse) by just after 6pm.

215 WEBSITE

Updated items still regularly required for the main front page – any member wishing to write should let the Clerk have the copy. Cllr Dean stated that she will write something on the Welcome Packs.

216 DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

A discussion took place with regard to Beacons, after which it was decided that a bonfire beacon would be preferable to a church tower one. Possible venues were the Castle, Elms Farm or the Recreation Ground and members need to give further thought to whether there should be fireworks to accompany this. Cllr Salmon was concerned that given health and safety requirements, the Recreation Ground may be too small to achieve the required clearance area for the public. Date is 4 June 2012.

The Council has already agreed that the refurbishment of the Fountain area will commemorate the Jubilee.

Cllr Stiles referred to the programme of events held to mark the Silver Jubilee in 1977. A copy of the programme had been sent by the Clerk to all village organisations, together with a letter asking them to notify her of any planned events. Cllr Sell expressed his desire to see some tree planting take place in a suitable location. Cllr Dean asked whether any presentations had been made to school children to mark the Silver Jubilee.

217 GRITTING AND GRIT BOXES

The Chairman had tabled a paper detailing the areas currently gritted by Essex County and Uttlesford District Councils as well as the Parish Council. Various amendments were made based on memory of last year. Requests for ECC to grit Station Road and the pavements there along with St John's Road (school route) were to be made. Cllr Jones stated that he would be seeking confirmation from ECC of their proposals, and UDC had already confirmed that it would repeat what it did last year.

The list of paths which could be covered by the Parish Council was considered. The paths linking Cannon's Mead to Blythwood Gardens and the black bridge to Stoneyfield Drive were added, but the Vicarage Twitchell and Norman's Way to High Lane were deleted. Costs for the purchase of grit spreaders, as well as a labour cost, were detailed. It was envisaged that the work would be undertaken by Mr Frogley as litter picking would not be possible in icy conditions, and Mr Sutton if required to assist.

The owners of Elms Farm have kindly agreed to a storage container being sited on their land and this could provide a home for the delivery of grit coming from Essex County Council. The store was required anyway for large items currently housed in the gardener's shed. Locations for grit boxes were discussed and agreed, requiring the purchase of seven new boxes.

The Chairman then proposed the following

RECOMMENDATION that subject to written approval from insurers, the Parish Council would:

- a) Provide seven new grit boxes – one each on Chapel Hill, High Lane and Mount Drive, and two each at Foresthall Park and on the Croasdaile Estate.
- b) Purchase two grit spreaders and allow labour costs for grit to be spread on the following paths:

Crafton Green, Cooper's Alley, Lower Street to Burnell's Way, Recreation Ground to Millside, Lopy's Hill to Millfields, black bridge to Stoneyfield Drive and Cannon's Mead to Blythwood Gardens.

Total cost to the Council would be in the order of £1,100.

Seconded by Cllr Rich and agreed unanimously.

It was agreed that the Clerk would send a letter of thanks to Elms Farm.

[Cllr Rich left the meeting at 9pm]

218 DAY CENTRE

A paper had been circulated ahead of the meeting detailing proposals for the future maintenance and running of the Day Centre. Cllr Sell noted that the Manager is making efforts to increase attendance and awareness of the Centre which is good to see. It was agreed that this is a new relationship for the Parish Council which will develop over the years. A draft legal agreement should arrive from UDC by the end of this month. The Chairman pointed out that income to the Day Centre is diminishing and, if this pattern continues, its reserves will be used up within about three years.

Cllr Sell queried who would take responsibility for the bookings of the Centre. The Chairman replied that for the time being, this would be handled by the Day Centre manager, but the intention is that it will come to the Parish Council in due course.

Cllr Stiles referred to the name of the Day Centre – all members were asked to give this some thought for future deliberation.

[Cllr Evans left the meeting at 9.15pm]

219 CRAFTON GREEN PROJECT

As reported earlier, the working group will meet on 26 October. Cty Cllr Ray Gooding has prepared a draft document to send out to architects to invite tenders for initial proposals. This draft will be circulated to the working party for consideration after which it will be made available to the Full Council. Members expressed a vote of thanks to Cllr Gooding for his help in this way.

220 BUDGET 2012/13

Copies of the draft budget and accompanying notes were circulated and the Chairman talked members through the document line by line. A new item was added under code 106 Maintenance – Storage container and ground rent at £200. The sum of £4,500 was included under 201 Salaries for a second part-time assistant (allowing one full-time salary in total), and under 206 Other Payments, the sum of £3,000 for Unadopted Roads was deleted as there is a reserve of £5,000 already earmarked.

If the draft was adopted by the Council, this would lead to an increase of around 6.5% in expenditure. However, given the numbers of homes at Foresthall Park which will fall within the parish boundary from April 2012, an actual drop of 3.5-5% could be achieved in real terms. Members could then decide to add that surplus to reserves, or to reduce the precept raised from council tax payers.

Members then considered the current year – a report had been tabled which itemised where savings had been made, but also projects which it would be desirable to undertake. If approved, a net saving of £2,880 would be achieved in the current year.

Lighting – noted that once the final report on the safety inspection was received, the F&GP committee would be considering replacing the lanterns on the two columns in Greenfields which give very poor illumination and regularly go out of lighting.

Cllr Jones then proposed the following

RECOMMENDATION that the Council adopt the draft budget for 2012/13 as tabled, together with the list of amendments to the current year. All figures are subject to a further review by himself and the Clerk, and the Council will be asked to take its final decision and set the precept at Full Council on 14 December.

Unanimously agreed. Cllr Loughlin expressed a vote of thanks to the Chairman and Clerk for their work in preparing the draft budget.

Meeting closed 10.02pm