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**MINUTES of the meeting of Greenham Parish Council**  
*held at St Mary's Church Hall, Greenham*  
**on Wednesday 14th June 2017 at 7.30pm**

*Present:* Cllr Julian Swift-Hook (Chair)  
Cllr Chris Austin (Vice Chair)  
Cllr Meg Thomas  
Cllr Paul Walter  
Cllr Jon Gage  
Cllr Sally-Ann Jay  
Cllr Gary Puffett  
Cllr Billy Drummond  
Cllr Lindsey Middlemiss  
Cllr Arthur Johnson

*In attendance:* Clerk – David Fowler, Two representatives of the press, One member of the public, Cllr Jeremy Bartlett of West Berkshire Council.

**23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from: Cllr Pragna Hay, Cllr Phil Barnett, Cllr Paul Inman

**24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations of interest were received:

- a. Cllr Drummond declared that he is also a member of West Berkshire Council.
- b. Cllr Swift-Hook declared that he is also a member of Newbury Town Council and that he has an interest in the matter of 71 dwellings at Pyle Hill under item 38, Planning and Licensing.
- c. Cllr Middlemiss declared that she is the co-owner of 19, Pyle Hill with respect to item 38, Planning and Licensing.
- d. Cllr Austin declared that he owns land close to the land to the south of Newbury College with respect to item 38, Planning and Licensing.
- e. Cllr Gage declared that he is a Director of Rivar Sand and Gravel Ltd with respect to the 71 dwellings at Pyle Hill on item 38, Planning and Licensing.
- f. Cllrs Swift-Hook, Walter, Thomas declared that they are friends of Cllr Middlemiss in respect of 19 Pyle Hill under item 38, Planning and Licensing.

**25. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 11<sup>th</sup> MAY 2017**

**Proposed:** Paul Walter

**Seconded:** Meg Thomas

**RESOLVED**, with the abstention of Cllrs Gage and Puffett, that the minutes of the meeting on 11 May 2017 be accepted as a true and accurate account and be signed as so.

## **26. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman confirmed that David Fowler will be leaving his clerk's position as of 15<sup>th</sup> June 2017. The Chairman formally thanked him for everything he has done for the council since the start of April, adding that he had helped the council move forward enormously on the various matters, including assisting a step improvement to the council's governance.

## **27. CLERK'S REPORT**

The clerk reported his correspondence with Brian Radford, a local journalist, who had asked questions regarding the Control Tower, specifically asking for a council response, which was read out verbatim, as follows:

**From Mr Brian Radford:**

Good morning, David, Before you cycle off into the sunset...

You know how I've questioned the appointment of a project manager. and moves to appoint a cafe operator, for the control tower project, and how I find it hard to grasp that £60,000 would fund supplies, work, and wages. And if it would, why bother with a £100,000 loan? With this in mind, I've spoken to a few people very close to Greenham Parish Council, and had my attention drawn to the Financial Regulations, and given a clear warning that the regulations were being deliberately breached. Specifically, it is Regulation 4.6, which says...

"No expenditure should be authorised to any capital project, and no contract entered into, or tender accepted, involving capital expenditure, unless the council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available, and the requisite borrowing approval has been obtained."

I believe BALC and SIB might be given the same information. Can you please obtain a Greenham Parish Council response to this serious allegation which, I suppose, could have a big impact on any loan application?

**From Mr David Fowler, Clerk:**

Good afternoon, Brian.

Thanks for your email. I will put this to council as you've specifically asked, however, my perspective is that the Project manager has been contracted to complete 2 phases of work. The first is to build a scope of the remaining work with an accurate cost estimate against that work. This is required to make an accurate loan application. The second phase is to manage the remaining build. It is envisaged that the remaining build will itself be phased, the initial phase using the balance of existing funding to rapidly begin work to open the CT to the public, with the second phase using follow-on funding from PWLB to complete the full project.

I should stress that both phases of project management are fully costed and funding from within the existing budget is secure for this work. Tenders for final construction work will take place in due course once we (a) know the scope of that work (enabled by the initial project management work) and (b) have the necessary budget for the work. No contract has therefore been entered into without the funding available to pay for it.

This phased approach to the work was discussed with SIB at our meeting

on 2nd May. I should add, from my own experience, phrasing like this, with one piece of work enabling another is quite normal in the project management sector.

Regards  
David

The clerk gave his advice that, based on the reply he gave to Mr Radford, the council has answered the question sufficiently and that we don't need to go back to Mr Radford with any amplifying detail.

There was some discussion but no dissent was expressed regarding the clerk's advice.

## **28. PUBLIC SESSION**

Allan Mercado, a member of the public, asked a question: "Why has my letter, of which you have a copy, which I sent to the President of the United States, which was addressed to US veteran organisations, why is that letter, written back in February and the council made aware of it, why have I not received any written acknowledgement and why has the matter not been discussed by Greenham Parish Council?"

The clerk stated that he met Mr Mercado a few weeks ago and discussed both the letter. This was an action that the clerk had taken from the council meeting in April. The conclusion of the discussion was that Mr Mercado didn't feel that the letter to the veteran organisations was appropriate until the finances of the project were on a stable footing (for example with the PWLB loan in place). That was an action on the clerk, he felt, to follow that up and the clerk apologised if that wasn't made clear to Mr Mercado.

Mr Mercado asked whether the refurbishment of the Control Tower should be a tribute to the servicemen and women who served here for the defence of this country and of Europe.

The chairman said that, as that item was not on the agenda of the meeting, it should be put on the agenda of the Control Tower committee and that Mr Mercado will be kept informed this.

## **29. PLANNING AND LICENSING**

### **a. 17/01072/RESMAJ**

Newbury Racecourse

Approval of reserved matters following outline permission 14/03109/OUTMAJ. Matters seeking consent: access, appearance; landscaping; layout; scale.

Amendments to Parade Ring and South Entrance.

**Proposed:** Chris Austin

**Seconded:** Gary Puffett

**RESOLVED** unanimously, No objection

### **b. 17/01124/HOUSE**

19 Pyle Hill

Two storey side extension, single storey side extension to front porch, pool plant house and proposed garden studio.

Cllrs Middlemiss, Swift-Hook, Walter, Thomas and Gage declared an interest and left the room for this item. The Vice-Chairman took over the chair for this item.

**Proposed:** Chris Austin

**Seconded:** Billy Drummond

**RESOLVED** unanimously, No objection

**ACTION:** Clerk to inform West Berkshire Council of those planning decisions above.

It was noted that there will be two site visits on 20<sup>th</sup> June. Cllr Billy Drummond agreed to

attend these visits on behalf of the council. The visits are for: 1) 17/00158/COMIND Land south of Newbury College, Monks Lane, Newbury and 2) 17/00223/FULEXT Land on north side of Pyle Hill, Newbury.

### **30. FINANCE MATTERS**

#### a) Internal Audit report

The clerk summarised the internal audit report, which was more thorough than previous audits. The report praised the council on some aspects of its management and made constructive recommendations which are useful going forward.

Cllr Walter mentioned that page 4 of the report said “No agendas are published” on the council’s website but agendas have been published on the website. The point is that an archive of historical agendas has not been maintained on the website and it is the recommendation of the report that this should be done.

The Chairman read the overall conclusion from the report and summarised the recommendations. He noted that voting to accept the recommendations is not a vote to agree to implementing the recommendations.

**Proposed:** Paul Walter

**Seconded:** Lindsey Middlemiss

**RESOLVED** unanimously that the council accepts the internal audit prepared this month by “Auditing Solutions”.

#### b) Annual Governance statement

**Proposed:** Paul Walter

**Seconded:** Sally-Ann Jay

**RESOLVED** unanimously that the council accepts the Annual Governance statement and authorises the chair to sign it on behalf of the council.

#### c) Accounting statement 2016-2017

Documents were circulated including a statement of the financial variances of 2016-2017 compared to 2015-16

The chair pointed out a naming change concerning what is now known as Greenham Trust.

**Proposed:** Lindsey Middlemiss

**Seconded:** Billy Drummond

**RESOLVED** unanimously that the council accepts the Accounting Statement 2016-2017 with the name change amendment mentioned above.

#### d) Grant requests

The clerk reported a grant request from Victim Support Thames Valley. The clerk has asked them what service they provide to Greenham parishioners. When they respond the council can consider this grant request.

#### e) Cheques and direct debits

The clerk noted that we are required to refresh the mandates on our direct debits every two years.

- 1 The following cheque payments and direct debits were considered:

From the **CT account:**

Nil

From the **GPC account:**

- i. Sundog Maint. (CT Grounds Maintenance Apr 2017) (#1460 - £154.00)
- ii. Chq #1461 is cancelled.

- iii. D J Fowler (Clerk's Salary to 30 May - Mth 2) (#1462 - £905.99)
- iv. HMRC (PAYE deductions ref Clerk's Salary - Mth 2) (#1463 - £732.35)
- v. LGPS (Clerk's Pension Contributions) (#1464 - £399.37)
- vi. Greenham Business Park Ltd (office rent - Jun & Jul) (#1465 - £960.00)
- vii. Zurich Municipal (Insurance 2017/18) (#1466 - £2,071.71)
- viii. Newbury Office Supplies - office equipment (#1467 - £321.90)
- ix. Hamshire Assoc Local Councils (Advert for new Clerk) (#1468 - £168.00)
- x. BALC/NALC Subscriptions - (#1469 - £1,153.46)
- xi. SLCC Job Finder Advert (#1470 - £360.00)
- xii. Auditing Solutions - Internal Audit (#1471 - £1,008.00)
- xiii. J Swift Hook (expenses) (#1472 - £110.52) (Reissue as previous cheque #1454 lost and cancelled)

2 Direct Debits

- i. Sage One Payroll (July 17) - £6.00
- ii. BT (Phone Line May 17) - £131.34
- iii. SSE Bus Shelter electricity (May 2017) - £10.74

**Proposed:** Jon Gage

**Seconded:** Paul Walter

**RESOLVED** unanimously to authorise payment of the listed cheques and direct debits. The cheques were signed, including initialling of the invoices.

**ACTION:** The Acting Responsible Finance Officer, Cllr Swift-Hook to post/distribute the cheque payments listed above.

### 31. STANDING ORDERS

To allow further preparation time, this item will be carried forward to a future meeting.

### 32. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The clerk presented a new Financial Regulations document for the council based on "model" Financial Regulations published by the National Association of Local Councils.

**Proposed:** Julian Swift-Hook

**Seconded:** Chris Austin

**RESOLVED** unanimously that in section 2.2 of the document where it says: "a member other than the Chairman a cheque signatory" that this should be amended to "a member other than any authorised cheque signatories".

**Proposed:** Paul Walter

**Seconded:** Meg Thomas

**RESOLVED** unanimously that the "Draft Financial Regulations June 2017" be adopted as the Financial Regulations of the council, with the one amendment resolved above.

### 33. STAFFING COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Staffing Committee, Cllr Swift-Hook gave a report. Advertising has been commissioned for the vacant post of clerk. The deadline for applications is 3<sup>rd</sup> July. The job application pack is available on the council's website.

### 34. CONTROL TOWER

Cllr Gage read through his written report, which was presented to the council.

There was a discussion regarding the options for establishing entities to run the Control Tower.

**Proposed:** Jon Gage

**Seconded:** Paul Walter

**RESOLVED** unanimously that Greenham Parish Council work to establish a company limited by guarantee to run the Control Tower on a day to day basis. We aim to register this company with the Charities Commission to promote the charitable aims of entity as outlined in the 'Vision' document . It is further proposed that a trading subsidiary is set up that will have a relationship with the company limited by guarantee .

There was a discussion regarding three quotes, together with informal advice, received from three firms of solicitors (referred to as Companies A, B and C) concerning the establishment of the entities to run the Control Tower.

**Proposed:** Jon Gage

**Seconded:** Billy Drummond

**RESOLVED** unanimously that subject to a satisfactory interview by Cllrs, Gage, Jay, Swift-Hook and Austin (or substitute Cllr Walter) and subsequent approval by the council Chair, Vice Chair and Control Tower Committee Chair, Company C be appointed to advise and assist Greenham Parish Council in the formation of the operating entity. If the interview is not successful then Company B should be appointed based on performance at interview.

There was one addition to the report: A meeting with the Berkshire Association of Local Councils and the Control Tower Committee chairman has been arranged for June 26<sup>th</sup>, to discuss the Public Works Board Loan application.

It was mentioned that the new loan application needs to be approved at full council.

Cllr Gage mentioned that he has been asked to regularly share the actual spend against budgeted spend week on week, month on month.

**ACTION:** Cllr Gage to lead work to draft out the core skills required of the trustees/directors.

**ACTION:** All councillors and members of the public are invited to forward suggestions of people to serve as trustees/directors of the entities which will operate the Control Tower to Jon Gage by June 27<sup>th</sup>.

Cllr Austin said that he is still concerned about the external landscaping which needs to look a lot tidier. Cllr Gage said that a volunteer has come forward to tidy up that area.

### **35. OTHER ITEMS FOR INFORMATION OR POSSIBLE INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA**

The following items were listed as requiring consideration on future agendas:

- ) Councillors surgeries
- ) Reserve policy
- ) Report from Governance Working Group
- ) Office computer
- ) Racecourse bollards and bus shelters
- ) Standing orders review including Cut-off time for meetings
- ) Bus links
- ) Expenses policy
- ) Minutes 23<sup>rd</sup> May
- ) Victims Support grant
- ) Open Space society – John Mellor fields
- ) Audit recommendations
- ) Financial regulations new
- ) Health and safety policy

It was mentioned that the Vice-Chair is now Acting Proper officer and the Chair is now Acting Responsible Financial Officer following today's departure of the clerk, David Fowler. Under this arrangement, relations between the council and the media/press come under the responsibility of the Acting Proper Officer, who is the Vice-Chairman, Cllr Chris Austin.

Cllr Austin gave an update on the situation with Commoners on Greenham and Crookham Commons with relation to grazing.

**36. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Due to commercial, confidential sensitivity of the following item, it was felt necessary to table a motion to exclude the press and public.

**Proposed:** Julian Swift-Hook

**Seconded:** Lindsey Middlemiss

**RESOLVED** unanimously that under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business because publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

**37. WEBSITE**

A report was received from the clerk concerning the Council's website and involvement of MH-P previously to provide design work.

**Proposed:** Julian Swift-Hook

**Seconded:** Lindsey Middlemiss

**RESOLVED** unanimously that the council pay £540 to come from reserves to MH-P in full and final settlement and make it clear that we do not require their services any more.

**ACTION:** Acting Responsible Financial Officer, Cllr Swift-Hook to post the payment of £540 to MH-P with the provisos stated in the resolution above.

**There being no other business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9:58pm**

Chairman

Date