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MINUTES of the meeting of Greenham Parish Council
held at St Marys Church Hall, Greenham
on Thursday 26th January 2017 at 7.30pm

Present:

Gary Puffett	Meg Thomas
Paul Walter	Billy Drummond
Jon Gage	Lindsey Middlemiss.
Julian Swift-Hook (Chair)	Arthur Johnson (left meeting at 21:57).
Balu Sudra	Chris Austin (left meeting at 22.10).

In attendance: Locum Clerk Charlotte Booth.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Jon Gage declared that he works for a company that owns land in the parish.
Cllr Julian Swift-Hook declared that he is also a member of Newbury Town Council.
Cllr Arthur Johnson declared that he is also a member of Newbury Town Council.
Cllr Billy Drummond declared that he is also a member of West Berkshire Council.

3. STAFFING MATTERS

- a) **Proposed:** Cllr Julian Swift-Hook
Seconded: Cllr Chris Austin
Resolved: To move this agenda item from point 12 to point 3.
- b) **Proposed:** Cllr Julian Swift-Hook
Seconded: Cllr Chris Austin
Resolved: That Charlotte Booth be appointed as locum clerk, proper officer and RFO at a rate of £15ph. She will work for two half-days per week in the parish office on days to be agreed and the remainder from home, until a permanent clerk is appointed.

Cllr Gary Puffett stated that he does not approve of the Locum Clerk working from home.

The Chairman acknowledged that the Job Description needs to be kept under review but in the interim, as the parish office does not currently have a computer or basic stationery, the Clerk will need to complete some hours at home.

- c) The Chairman reported that the Staffing Committee considered three excellent proposals from specialist organisations to support the recruitment process for the permanent clerk post, all of which offered similar services at a similar price. Chris Rolley Associates was

appointed as [a] they proposed a fixed cost rather than hourly rate and [b] the council has previous experience of working with them.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Proposed: Cllr Paul Walter

Seconded: Cllr Billy Drummond

Resolved: That the minutes of a meeting of Council held on 11th January 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Freedom of Information response has been signed by Cllr Chris Austin as Acting Proper Officer and dispatched to the requester.

6. PUBLIC SESSION

There were no members of the public present.

7. DISPENSATION

Proposed: Cllr Julian Swift-Hook

Seconded: Cllr Billy Drummond

Resolved: That all members present, having applied for a Dispensation and having completed an Application for Dispensation form, be granted said Dispensation under s33(a) of the Localism Act to speak and vote in any meeting at which any matter which has a bearing on the setting of the council Precept is being or is due to be considered. All the forms were counter-signed by the Proper Officer.

8. PLANNING AND LICENSING

The following planning applications were considered:

Number: 16/03632/HOUSE

Location: Burnett House, New Road

Detail: Part conversion of double garage to create a study/playroom. To include a new window on the face of the property.

Decision: No objection

Number: 17/00017/TPW

Location: 24 Kempton Close

Detail: Reduce canopy over garden by approximately 1.5 meters (15%) as the tree is overshadowing the garden.

Decision: No objection

Proposed: Cllr Paul Walter

Seconded: Cllr Billy Drummond

Resolved: That the Decisions above be adopted as the Council's views in respect of each of these planning applications and passed to the Local Planning Authority.

Number: 17/00023/COND6

Location: 3-7 Sandleford Farm, Sandleford

Detail: Removal of contaminated land.

Decision: No objection

Proposed: Cllr Paul Walter

Seconded: Cllr Billy Drummond

Resolved: That the Decision above be adopted as the Council's views in respect of this planning application and passed to the Local Planning Authority.

Cllr Jon Gage, Cllr Chris Austin and Cllr Lindsey Middlemiss abstained due to interest. 6 voted in favour and one voted against (Cllr Arthur Johnson) the above planning application.

Action: Cllr Paul Walter to pass the Council's decisions back to West Berkshire Council.

Action: Cllr Paul Walter to liaise with the Locum Clerk regarding producing planning lists for future consultation.

9. PARISH OFFICE

The license to occupy Suite 23 of Liberty House expires on 28th February. Renewal has been offered by the landlord, Greenham Common Trust, on the same terms (12 month licence, option to terminate early by giving three months' notice at £480 pcm) plus a one-off administrative fee of £30 + VAT.

It was agreed by all that an office space was important for access to the paperwork, a base for the Clerk, and a place accessible to the public.

Cllr Billy Drummond pointed out that neither the office location at Greenham Business Park nor the Control Tower are easily accessible to residents, and it may be better to consider an alternative, more central office location in the longer term.

Proposed: Cllr Chris Austin

Seconded: Cllr Lindsey Middlemiss

Resolved: a) To sign the licence renewal in February on the terms offered.
b) Cllr Meg Thomas to explore alternative locations (e.g. Greenham Community Centre or the racecourse) and report back to the next meeting.

10. GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP

Last November, Cllrs Swift-Hook and Inman were appointed to review the Council's governance. Cllr Gary Puffett said that now he is Chairman, Cllr Swift-Hook should not review governance because he is now responsible for it.

Proposed: Cllr Julian Swift-Hook

Seconded: Cllr Billy Drummond

Resolved: a) To set up a Governance Working Group with the remit to review the "Governance Health Check and Review" dated August 2016 and any other governance issues, and report back to Council.
b) That Terms of Reference for the Working Group be approved by Council at its next meeting.
c) That Cllrs Gary Puffett and Paul Inman and at least one more councillor be appointed to the Working Group.

11. FINANCE

a) The bank mandate requires any two signatories to sign cheques and authorise other bank transactions. At present Cllrs Chris Austin and Phil Barnett are the only two signatories.

Proposed: Cllr Chris Austin

Seconded: Cllr Paul Walter

Resolved: That Cllrs Julian Swift-Hook and Lindsey Middlemiss be added to the bank mandate as signatories.

b) Authorisation of cheque payments:

i)	Greenham Common Trust (office rent)	£480.00
ii)	Greenham Parochial Church Council (grant)	£150.00
iii)	Roger Chester – final salary payment	£1441.55
iv)	HMRC – NI/TAX (Month 10)	£488.24

Proposed: Cllr Lindsey Middlemiss

Seconded: Cllr Paul Walter

Resolved: To approve the signing of cheques i) and ii) but to defer iii) and iv) until the details have been verified.

- c) Grant funding requests: none received
- d) Revenue Budget 2017-18
- i) **Proposed:** Cllr Arthur Johnson
Seconded: Cllr Meg Thomas
Resolved: Not to give any money to West Berkshire Council for their libraries budget and to allocate the £3,690 saved to the Clerk's Salary budget.
- ii) A sum is budgeted for Churchyard Maintenance, but in 3 years this hasn't been paid.
Action: Cllr Billy Drummond to speak to Revd McLeod to see if this is still required.
- iii) The increased CAB donation was discussed.
Action: Cllr Chris Austin to seek information from CAB regarding the number of Greenham residents supported by CAB.
- Proposed:** Cllr Lindsey Middlemiss
Seconded: Cllr Arthur Johnson
Resolved: To add any money saved on other budget lines to the Clerk's salary budget.
- iv) Five budget lines were altered from the draft presented to the meeting:
- Clerk Net Salary/Tax/NI (merge to one line) – increase from £20,659 to £25,689.
 - Office rent – raise from £4800 to £5760.
 - Website Maintenance - reduce from £1500 to £900.
 - Delete West Berkshire Libraries line
 - Delete Election and create a restricted reserve instead.
- Proposed:** Cllr Arthur Johnson
Seconded: Cllr Lindsey Middlemiss
Resolved: To accept the changes to the budget lines as noted and to declare a precept of £89,758 (which represents a 0% increase per household).

e) Capital and Reserves

The Council has a cash balance of £99,479 as of 31 December 2016. Adjusted for existing commitments, this figure is £81,202 (including £41,500 restricted as underwriting for the control tower project). This represents 13.92 months' revenue expenditure compared to the 3-6 months' revenue expenditure that Councils are recommended to hold as free reserves.

It was proposed to transfer £41,500 from reserves to the Control Tower project budget, to fund the continuation of the project and reduce any borrowing requirement.

Cllr Gary Puffett did not agree with the proposal and considered it more appropriate for the Council to borrow money to fund the project and keep the money in reserves.

Cllr Lindsey Middlemass pointed out that holding large reserves of more than 100% of the council's annual revenue costs would attract adverse scrutiny and it is better to use the council's own excess reserves than get a higher loan.

Cllr Chris Austin added that it would be very difficult to justify such large reserves to an auditor.

Cllr Jon Gage noted that this funding would really kick-start the project again and will be greatly appreciated.

Proposed: Cllr Paul Walter
Seconded: Cllr Billy Drummond
Resolved: To remove the “underwriting” designation from £41,500 held as a restricted reserve for the last 15 months and release the funds immediately to the Control Tower project.
Cllr Gary Puffett requested that his vote against the motion be recorded.

The other restricted reserves items were discussed. No-one was able to confirm whether these sums needed to be retained as restricted reserves.

Action: To investigate the other restricted reserves listed (Parish Plan £1,149; Dream Scheme £1,074; Diamond £2,711) and confirm whether they are still required to be retained as restricted sums.

12. CONTROL TOWER

- a) **Proposed:** Cllr Jon Gage
Seconded: Cllr Lindsey Middlemiss
Resolved: To co-opt Dean Graham onto the Control Tower Committee.
- b) Social Investment Business (SIB - the Control Tower project’s largest single funder) has requested information from the Council in response to an allegation that their grant has not been spent in accordance with the conditions in their offer letter dated 16th December 2013.

A draft reply to SIB evidencing that the Council has spent the SIB grant funds properly and in line with the grant conditions had been presented to the Control Tower committee for review the previous evening and had been referred to Council unchanged.

Cllr Gary Puffett wanted the letter withheld until all the invoice details in the letter had been verified. A discussion also took place regarding the availability of information regarding the CT project requested by the former chair of the CTC. Cllr Puffett stated that the former chair had requested details of the project during his tenure and had not received all of the information asked for. Cllr Jon Gage confirmed that the information was present in January in the parish office.

Cllr Paul Walter pointed out that the expenditure has successfully passed through five separate audits, both internal and external.

Proposed: Cllr Jon Gage
Seconded: Cllr Lindsey Middlemiss
Resolved: a) That Council does not believe it is in breach of SIB grant conditions;
b) That the draft letter to SIB confirming this and setting out a detailed explanation be signed by the Chairman of Council and by the Chairman of the Control Tower Committee on behalf of the Council and sent to SIB.

Cllr Gary Puffett requested that his vote against the motion be recorded.

- c) Other matters reported to the meeting by the Chairman of the Control Tower Committee.
- 1) PWLB loan application – further information has been requested and a revised draft is being prepared. It will be presented to Council for approval before re-submission.
 - 2) Business Plan for the Project and café – Cllr Jon Gage is preparing a draft which will be presented to Council for approval.
 - 3) Review of Schedule of Works – This schedule was prepared seven months ago, is now out of date, and needs reviewing. All Control Tower Committee members have been asked to peruse the document and delete/add/amend as appropriate.

- 4) Project Manager – Cllr Gary Puffett and Dean Graham are drafting a job specification for the role of Project Manager.
- 5) Construction (CDM) regulations – this will be under the remit of the Project Manager. Cllr Gary Puffett added that non-compliance with the CDM regulations could result in a custodial sentence as a maximum penalty.
- 6) Cllr Lindsey Middlemiss and Cllr Meg Thomas will review the draft Interpretation Strategy.
- 7) Urgent repairs to control tower (already approved) – The contractor will be starting work on the brickwork next week, and then after that the work on the roof will start.
- 8) Cllr Jon Gage confirmed that an account can be opened with the Council’s existing bankers (Lloyds) known as a Treasurer’s account, subject to a minimum turnover of £50k. The signing authority will remain the same (i.e. any two signatories). The costs are £6.50 pcm for the account, £0.65 for cheques (in and out), and £1 per £100 cash paid in up to £1000, then £0.80 per £100.

Proposed: Cllr Jon Gage

Seconded: Cllr Billy Drummond

Resolved: That a separate bank account be opened for Control Tower project funds.

13. OTHER ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY OR FOR POSSIBLE INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

- Meeting dates for Annual Assembly and Annual Meeting
- Report back on Website
- PR/media/communication policy
- Council/councillors’ surgeries
- Response to boundary review consultation
- Reserves policy
- Play area on Stroud Green
- Play area outside control tower
- Matched funding for WBC member’s bid
- Racecourse development street names
- Review control tower committee terms of reference
- Racecourse bollards – update/feedback
- Report back from Governance Working Group

There being no other business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 22:40 hrs

Chairman

Date