

FOUR MARKS PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee
Held on Wednesday 21st July 2021 commencing at 6.30pm
This meeting was held at the Benians Pavilion, Uplands Lane, Four Marks**

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Cllr Janet Foster (Chairman), Cllrs John Davis and Reg Pullen
IN ATTENDANCE:	Sarah Goudie (Executive Officer - EO)
	No members of the public
APOLOGIES:	Cllr Mike Sanders, Cllr Anne Tomlinson

21.23 FGP ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr Davis proposed Cllr Foster to continue as Chairman of this Committee, the nomination was seconded by Cllr Pullen, and with Cllr Foster accepting the nomination was duly elected as Chairman.

21.24 FGP APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence for medical reasons had been received from Cllr Sanders and Cllr Tomlinson, the apologies were acknowledged and accepted.

21.25 FGP OPEN SESSION/PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Pullen to the Committee and with no members of the public in attendance and no items to raise under the Open Session, the meeting commenced at 6.35pm. **Standing Orders were applied.**

21.26 FGP DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

21.27 FGP TERMS OF REFERENCE

The updated Terms of Reference were circulated with some minor changes to align them with the other Committees, they were approved for submission to Full Council for approval.

21.28 FGP MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Wednesday 31st March 2021 were proposed as accurate by Cllr Davis seconded by Cllr Pullen and were duly signed by the Chairman, and all previous Minutes of all meetings held remotely. The EO advised of a change of wording to paragraph 2 of Minute 21.17.3.

There were two matters arising from the previous meeting.

Code of Conduct. The updated version following national review was still awaited and the outcome of the consultation on Standards. However, the EO was currently liaising with the Chief Executive of HALC to see if they would be able to provide training as EHDC no longer offer this opportunity and believes it is essential training for Councillors.

Developers' contributions. The EO confirmed the retirement of Alisdair Tweddle, and that our new Community Officer, Dean Mohammed, had informed her that the S106 system was being audited, and once complete they should be open for applications again, hopefully by the Autumn.

21.29 FGP BENIANS PAVILION

The EO circulated a draft amended Licence to Occupy with changes highlighted with proposal to remove the reference to Sport England but keep the criteria to ensure that a firm structure with proper accounting procedures were kept in place. The Committee's AGM is scheduled for 29th July, where the Council will present the Licence to Occupy for signature with the request that the Committee review their Constitution as agreed at the previous Finances & General Purposes meeting, and procedures tightened to ensure improved accounting. After a few

additional minor amendments, the updated Licence to Occupy was approved for submission to the Benians Committee at their AGM.

21.30 FGP POLICY REVIEW

Although Cllr Sanders was absent from the meeting, he had reviewed the following policies with suggested changes, which were discussed and agreed as follows:

- **Communications and Social Media Policy**
Changes were suggested to points 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 8.4, which were discussed and agreed to implement, with some minor amendments. A new clause was included to separate recommendations on Councillors submitting personal letters to media outlets.
- **Grants Policy and Application Form**
An addition to third bullet point of 5 to allow the applicant to vary the purpose of the award of the grant upon written request, was agreed. The date of the application to be added to the form.
- **Protocol for Planning Application Meetings**
Replace 'members' to Councillors throughout the document, and change paragraph 'Individual Councillor discussions' to 'Councillors shall not agree to one-to-one discussions with developers, unless it is in a personal capacity with privately owned land and stated as such'.
The addition of 'at least 14 days prior to a monthly planning meeting' on the first bullet point of legal protocol.
- **Unmanned Aerial Systems Policy**
New legislation requirement and link to be added.

The AEO reviewed the following policies, with proposed and subsequently agreed changes where applicable, as follows:

- **Data Protection Policy**
The AEO noted that the policy is focussed primarily on employee data and raised whether the policy should be amended to include service provider's data, together with destruction details and a sentence included on staff email signatures. It was agreed that the Policy should be reviewed in conjunction with the Privacy Notice and brought back to the next Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting for approval.
- **Data Retention Policy**
No changes
- **Privacy Notice**
Clerk changed to Executive Officer
- **Publication Scheme**
Minor administrative corrections.
- **Equality and Diversity Policy**
The policy has been changed from Equality Policy to Equality and Diversity Policy, a later piece of legislation has been added relating to the advancement of individuals with protected characteristics. There has been some compliancy rewording and a category for the procurement of goods and services included.
- **Health & Safety in the Workplace**
Minor administrative corrections and reference to the recently adopted Lone Worker Policy.

Cllr Tomlinson, although absent from the meeting, had sent the following report on the policies under her scrutiny.

- **Absence Management Policy**
No changes.
- **Disciplinary Policy**
No changes.
- **Grievance Policy**
No changes.
- **Training & Development**
Minor administrative corrections were made, however it was noted that, due to Covid, training requirements have not been met for Councillors, and that the training programme needs to resume. EO will circulate details of HALC training sessions. For discussion in a future Agenda item.

Cllr Foster reviewed the following policies with suggested changes, and agreed, as follows:

- **Gifts and Hospitality**
Remove reference to the form being on the website from paragraph 4. Website address to be updated and some consistency administration corrections. Gifts and Hospitality Register to be included on the website. Action EO.
- **Illegal and Authorised Encampment Procedures Policy**
No amendments to the policy but some consistency administrative corrections were made. The contacts page needs to be updated, including details of Solicitors. Action AEO.
- **Child & Vulnerable Adult Policy**
Remove bullet point 3 from Policy Objective as not deemed necessary with other policies in place. Some administrative consistency corrections and a rewording of paragraph 3 of the Declaration.
- **Marking the Death of a Monarch**
The Chairman asked to EO to check the suitability of the condolence book for the Queen and asked if the Council hasn't already, to purchase some black armbands. The EO advised that there had been some amendments to Operation London Bridge following the death of the Duke of Edinburgh and would be seeking further advice as to whether anything needs to be changed on the current protocol document. Some changes to the document have been made following the death of the Duke of Edinburgh, including reference to his passing. The document will be review as and when appropriate.
- **Protocol for public and press reporting at meetings**
Amended to show new logo and new sign printed off and laminated and should be on display at every meeting, reviewed in conjunction with any changes to Standing Orders.

Cllr Davis reviewed the following policies, with the following changes proposed, and agreed.

- **Financial Regulations**
Clerk is changed to Executive Officer throughout the document for consistency.
 - 1.15 New paragraph to reflect the removal of the Audit Commission and include the replacement Act.
 - 2.3 Change Annual Return to Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)
 - 2.9 Remove reference to Audit Commission Act.
 - 2.10 New paragraph to reflect Internal Auditors advice that a principal authority should have an auditing scrutiny committee dependent upon size of the Council.
 - 3.1 Removed. Not applicable to this Council.
 - 4.1 Delegate authority level changed from £500 to £1000, as per Terms of Reference and Auditor's recommendation
 - 4.4 Removed as covered under Section 3 Budget and Forward Planning.
 - 5.2 Wording removed as copies of invoices are not presented to Council with payment schedule, and Committee agreed that this is not necessary due to reconciliation checks.
 - 5.4 'Promptly' added within sentence.
 - 5.8 Changed to limit the amount that a Committee can award as a grant to no more than £1000, anything higher must be approved at Full Council.

- 6.3 Changed to reflect the change in payment by BACS where possible.
- 6.4 Wording change to reflect change to 6.3.
- 6.6 Wording change to reflect change to 6.3.
- 6.13 Suggestion that back ups should be made to a cloud facility, it was agreed that this should be discussed as a future agenda item, but remain as it is for now.
- 8.3 Remove as not required, Councillors see copies of bank statements monthly.
- 8.5 Now 8.4, remove 'consider the need for' and replace with maintain.
- 9.6 Changed to 'the origin of each receipt shall be recorded, for simplification.
- 9.7 Removed, not applicable.
- 16.1 Risk Management Statements changed to Council Risk Assessment.

- **Subject Access Request**

No changes.

- **Tree Management Policy**

Change to email address, bullet point 3. Update to reflect the Council's policy of planting two trees for every one lost. Some administrative updates and changes made to the final paragraph making reference to the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan and reiterate the Council's pledge to protect and increase trees and hedgerows within Four Marks.

Minute note. A detailed tree inspection is due this year. Action EO/AEO.

21.31 FGP ADDITIONAL MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

21.31.1 Insurance Review

The EO advised the Committee that the annual insurance premium was due from 1st October and the LTA was coming to an end. Some explanatory material, including the renewal notice, was circulated. The EO advised that once the quotations had been received a report will be compiled for perusal by the Committee for presentation and approval at the September Full Council meeting.

21.31.2 Additional documents on the website

Following a couple of recent queries, the EO asked the Committee if more documents should be available on the website. After a detailed discussion it was agreed not to add any further documentation as it is all available upon request under the Publication Scheme.

21.31.3 Council publicity

The EO referred to a recent query over the lack of publicity of meetings and the follow up suggestion of adding a contact form to be added to a circulation list for council meeting details. It was discussed and agreed that, at this stage, not to take this any further. Social media updates would continue as often as possible, together with notifications on the website, on notice boards and in the Four Marks News and this was deemed sufficient.

21.32 FGP NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 27th October 2021, 6.30pm, Benians Pavilion. This is the budget meeting.

21.33 FGP The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.30pm.

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Chairman