

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 30th NOVEMBER 2005 AT 10.00 a.m.
AT HARTLEY LIBRARY, ASH ROAD**

Present: Cllr Mr L Abraham
Cllr Mr C Alford (Chairman)
Cllr Mr A Barnett
Cllr Mr J Gaywood
Cllr Mr B Ramsay

In attendance: Mrs J Hoad (Clerk)
2 members of the public

1. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED: That, the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 19th October 2005 be approved and signed as a correct record.

4. Half year internal audit 2005/06

The Committee examined the interim internal audit report from the Council's internal auditor for the audit period 1st April 2005 to 30th September 2005.

The report stated that the income of £250 under the heading of "staff costs" related to an overpayment of tax and national insurance. The Clerk reported that the income was not as stated in the report, but was as a result of filing the end of year tax returns on line and explained that the Government was encouraging all employers to adopt this method of filing end of year returns by offering cash incentives over the next 5 years.

The interim audit report also referred to an income generated by the sales of the parish plan. The Clerk explained that this income related to a grant received from Action with Communities in Rural Kent to support the Parish Plan Steering Committee's work to print a survey questionnaire in advance of the production of a Parish Plan. The Council had, on behalf of the Parish Plan Steering Committee, paid the invoice relating to the cost of printing the survey questionnaire, in order that the VAT could be recovered and this action had been previously agreed with the Council's internal auditor.

During the internal audit the Clerk had sought advice from the Council's internal auditor on matters relating to the Chairman's allowance. The internal auditor had advised that the Council should record in its minutes that the Chairman's allowance was paid under section 15 (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order to meet the expenses of his office.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the internal audit report be received and the internal auditor be asked to correct the interim internal audit report for the period 1st April 2005 to 30th September 2005 as set out above and,

(2) it be recorded in the minutes that the allowance paid to the Chairman, as provided for within the Council's annual budget, is done so in accordance with powers

contained under section 15 (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 to meet the expenses of his office.

5. Income and expenditure

The Committee examined a report setting out (1) a summary of the Council's receipts and payments from 1st April 2005 to 24th November 2005 and the Council's net financial position as at 24th November 2005 and (2) a bank reconciliation as at 24th November 2005 setting out the balances held by the Council.

The Committee was satisfied that the projected reserve held in the general fund at the end of the current financial year would be in line with that reported at the previous meeting. The Committee identified one item of expenditure relating to the works to improve the access arrangements at Manor Field which had not been included in the out turn figures for the end of the year. The Committee considered these works should be taken from the capital reserve and could be set against the budgetary sum included in the budget for the purchase of land at Manor Field, which would not be going ahead due to the landowners' rejection of the Council's offer to purchase two strips of land at Manor Field.

RESOLVED: That, the financial report and bank reconciliation be approved.

6. Hartley Wood

The Committee considered a report on work relating to the survey of land and trees in Hartley Wood which is required to be carried out by the Council in order to satisfy the requirements of its insurers to enable public liability insurance cover to be extended to include the area of land in Hartley Wood being gifted to the Council by Mr Mainprize.

The Committee examined plans prepared by the Land Registry showing the position of the registered plots of land located in the north part of Hartley Wood. The Committee noted there were areas of land within this part of the woodland that had not been registered with the Land Registry and that these areas of land appeared to have no known owners. It was explained that the areas of unregistered land within this part of the woodland where there appeared to be no known owners were the subject of a claim for possessory title lodged by the Council.

The Committee was shown the approximate location of three further plots of land located in the wood that were not registered at the Land Registry, but where the landowners were known to the Council. It was confirmed that these three unregistered plots of land where the landowners were known to the Council were not included in the Council's possessory title claim. The Committee noted the Council held details of the landowners of one of these unregistered plots of land, but although the landowner of the two other unregistered plots of land had been contacted requesting details of their plots, to date no information had been forthcoming.

The Committee noted the Council's application to seek Village Green status on the area of woodland in Hartley Wood owned by the London Borough of Southwark was currently being progressed by Kent County Council. The Committee suggested that at some time in the future the Council may wish to consider seeking Village Green status on the remaining areas of Hartley Wood.

The Committee noted that as a result of the increase in the size of the plot of land being gifted to the Council by Mr Mainprize, there may be some additional costs associated with the land surveying work and preparation of the arboriculturist's report.

RECOMMENDED: That,

(1) the report be received,

(2) the quotation (Q.4484.A) dated 2nd September 2005 from Glen Surveys Ltd to undertake land survey work as specified in stages 1 and 2 and as set in their letter of the 2nd September for sum of £1,250 and £450 respectively plus VAT be accepted,

(3) Glen Surveys Ltd be invited to submit a revised quotation in respect of stage 3 of the land survey work, to mark the area of land owned by the Council including the area of land being gifted to the Council with sufficient 600 mm deep ground markers fitted flush with the ground in order that the extent of the Council's land may be identified,

(4) the quotation dated 9th August 2005 from Quaife Woodlands for the sum of £450 plus VAT to carry out a hazard risk survey of the four plots of land owned by the Council be accepted and Quaife Woodlands be invited to submit a quotation to extend the aforementioned hazard risk survey to incorporate all the land being gifted to the Council by Mr Mainprize and,

(5) the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee be asked to consider the possibility of seeking Village Green status on the remaining land at Hartley Wood at some time in the future after the Village Green application currently lodged with Kent County Council in respect of land owned by the London Borough of Southwark has been determined.

7. Longfield Hill recreation ground

The Committee examined a report on the Council's request for a financial contribution from Longfield and New Barn Parish Council and Meopham Parish Council towards the maintenance of the playground at Longfield Hill, on the grounds that the playground was not used by the residents of Parish of Hartley. The Committee considered letters received from both Parish Councils' explaining that neither Council was prepared to make any financial contribution towards the upkeep of play equipment at Longfield Hill. The Committee was reminded that the budgetary provision for 2006/07 in respect of the maintenance of playground equipment had been reduced by a sum of £3,000 from £5,000 to £2,000, as the Committee felt it could no longer continue to spend large sums of money on items of play equipment that served no purpose for its residents. The Committee suggested the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee should continue to maintain the playground to a minimum level of repair sufficient to ensure it meets the required safety standards until such time as it was no longer viable to do so, after which the playground should be gradually phased out.

RECOMMENDED: That, (1) the report be received, (2) the letters from Longfield and New Barn Parish Council and Meopham Parish Council be noted and (3) the matter be referred back to the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee for consideration.

8. Donations

The Committee considered requests for donations from Victim Support Kent and the Kent Wildlife Trust.

RECOMMENDED: That, no action be taken on the requests for donations from the Kent Wildlife Trust and Victim Support Kent.

9. Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005

The Committee considered a briefing note prepared by NALC on the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) consultation paper on proposed guidance relating to the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 which came into force on 7th April 2005. The Act gives Parish Councils new and extended powers to tackle local environmental issues and measures included in the Act cover issues relating to crime and disorder, nuisance and abandoned vehicles, litter and refuse, graffiti and defacement, waste, dogs, and noise. From April 2006 Parish Councils will be able to issue fixed penalty notices for litter, graffiti, fly posting and dog offences.

The Committee expressed concern over how the legislation could be implemented and enforced at a parish level which had limited resources at its disposal. An e mail received from Cllr Harris expressing his concern over the legislation was considered by the

Committee. It was reported that Kent County Council would not be willing to support powers being delegated to its Community Wardens to issue fixed penalty notices.

RESOLVED: That, the report be noted.

10. Noticeboards

The Committee considered a quotation to repair the vandalised noticeboard at Wellfield.

RECOMMENDED: That, (1) the quotation for the sum of £25.00 from Mr Glidewell to replace the vandalised perspex sheet on the noticeboard at Wellfield be accepted and (2) the Clerk be authorised to make arrangements for repairs to be undertaken to the Council's noticeboards upto a sum of £50.

11. Date of the next meeting.

To be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 11.10 a.m.

Signed:.....
Chairman of F & G P Committee

Date:.....

