

## Town Clerk report to F & GP meeting 5 July 2016

### Agenda item 5 – Council land assets

Maps are attached separately for Member information outlining the land assets on the Council asset register listed as owned by the Town Council, following a request at the last committee meeting to review these holdings.

A reminder to Members of the following Financial Regulation 14.3, which states:

*No real property (interests in land) shall be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law. In each case a report in writing shall be provided to council in respect of valuation and surveyed condition of the property (including matters such as planning permissions and covenants) together with a proper business case (including an adequate level of consultation with the electorate).*

- ❖ **Decision required: Members need to review the land assets and decide what, if any, action is needed**

### Agenda item 6 – Staffing matters

Due to the confidential nature of these items, they are covered in a separate briefing note.

### Agenda item 7 – Administration issues

#### Proposal and resolution templates

The new Council Chairman and I met in May to discuss a number of issues, one of which related to the decision making and recording process in meetings.

There have been a number of occasions where Members are asked to make a decision on a proposal at a meeting, where unclear information is provided in advance of the meeting, leading to confusion over what it is they are being asked to decide on.

Equally, upon reviewing how decisions are recorded in the minutes, there are some which are recorded in an ambiguous way.

In an effort to alleviate both problems, I have drawn up a proposal template for Member or officer use, and could even be made available for members of the public to put forward ideas to the Town Council. This should be completed in advance of the meeting where the proposal is to be discussed, so it can be circulated with the agenda.

By filling out the information requested, Members should have a clear idea of what is being proposed and how it will be of benefit, how much it is likely to cost and what permissions and/or consultations are needed. It is not expected that a Member will have completed all the financial obligations of three quotes etc, but at least there would be some indicative costs given at an early stage of discussion. It is also not expected that Members will have agreed any works with contractors, as this can only be done by the office staff.

I asked Cllr Jessop to review the proposal template, and he has completed a working example which is shown below:

**Proposal Summary (working example)**

<b>Proposal:</b>	The TC is instructed to investigate the options available on resurfacing the Lower Mount Street car park and to establish reasonable approximate costs for each option.
<b>For consideration by:</b>	<del>Full Council / Environment / ER &amp; TD / F &amp; GP / P &amp; T</del> <i>(delete as appropriate)</i>
<b>Date:</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> May 2016
<b>Submitted by:</b>	RJJ
<b>Proposal details:</b>  <i>Include benefits of proposal and how any issues will be overcome.</i>  <i>Attach further detail if needed</i>	The Council needs to reduce the long term costs of repairing continuously occurring potholes in the carpark and make the surface safe for both vehicles and pedestrians.
<b>Budget information:</b>  <i>Include assessment of costs and how these will be covered</i>	TC to advise.
<b>Consents needed:</b>	<del>ESCC / RDC / Other (specify)</del> <i>(delete as appropriate)</i>  Landlord's consent may be required. TC to advise.
<b>Consulted parties:</b>	

The resolution template, which I would recommend is used in the minutes, is detailed below:

**RESOLVED:**

<b>Decision:</b>	
<b>Proposer / Seconder:</b>	
<b>For / Against</b>	
<b>Agreed budget:</b>	
<b>Agreed timescale:</b>	
<b>Action delegated to :</b>	

This is intended to clearly record the decision, the agreed budget and timescale and who is delegated to complete the actions required, whether that is solely an officer, or in further consultation with the

committee chairman for example. This should help Members expectation levels regarding seeing an agreed decision come into action.

- ❖ **Decision required: Members need to decide whether to adopt the proposal and resolution templates for use at all sub-committee, committee and Full Council meetings**

### IT proposal

Members will recall I have regularly made the case for improving our IT systems by switching to laptops with a separate free standing remote hard drive allowing, for example, better use of the upstairs office with access to all the computer files.

We carried out a similar exercise at my previous Council, with assistance from a Wealden District Council IT specialist, and it proved very successful, also allowing access to Council files from remote locations during meetings.

I've been unable to secure the same level of support to do a similar exercise here, and while I am confident I could set up the new systems, I would be worried about transferring all the data without the risk of losing any critical information.

Attached separately is a proposal from an external IT company (recommended to me by the WDC IT specialist) to carry out the necessary set up and data transfer of the proposed system. As you will see, this is expensive, and needs careful consideration as to whether there will be real benefit to making these changes.

The decision regarding future staffing arrangements will directly impact on what IT resources we need in the office. As a minimum requirement, I would recommend purchase of a single laptop which could be used in the upstairs office. The files could be transferred onto a flash drive to plug into the laptop, and any completed work then saved back to the existing workstations. A reasonable laptop could be purchased for around £300 - £350.

- ❖ **Decision required: Members need to decide what, if any, changes to make to the existing IT arrangements**

### Online mapping systems

The maps Members reviewed as part of agenda item 5, were produced from an online mapping system called **Parish Online**. The Town Clerk signed the Town Council up to a free 30 day trial on 13 June 2016 to allow Members to see how using the system might be of benefit to the Town Council.

**Parish Online** costs £20 as an initial set up fee, then an annual subscription based on the population of the Town/Parish. Currently, this amounts to £196 per annum for Battle Town Council.

The maps can be used to plot Council land assets (as demonstrated), dog and litter bins, memorial bench locations, street light locations – anything that is wanted to be added. It can also provide supplementary information for assessing planning applications, and includes useful tools for measuring distances and areas of features.

I also invited a representative of a company called **Pear Technology** to meet with me, to present details of the mapping tool they provide to local Councils. Their digital mapping system is very impressive, with extensive layers of detail far more advanced than **Parish Online**. This is of course reflected in the cost, with initial set up fees of around £700 (depending on the exact level of detail signed up for) and then an annual subscription in the region of £275.

While the system offered by **Pear Technology** is clearly better, the current staffing arrangements and workload in the office mean it is highly unlikely that we would have either the time or necessity to use the system to its fullest capacity to justify the cost. However, the **Parish Online** system does provide a useful tool which would be used to support existing work, such as the asset register, at a reasonable cost.

Further information about the **Pear Technology** system is available in the Town Council office, and a demonstration of the **Parish Online** system is available for Members to use see during the free trial period.

Either system may be of benefit to the developing Neighbourhood Plan in providing detailed maps.

- ❖ **Decision required: Members need to decide whether purchasing an online mapping tool is worthwhile, and if so, which option to choose. The recommendation of the Town Clerk is to purchase the Parish Online system**

[Agenda item 8 – Environment Committee requests regarding reserves](#)

At the Environment committee meeting held on 24 May 2016, the following resolutions were recorded:

*Cllr Favell proposed that F&GP be requested to transfer £6,000 from reserves to facilitate the trade-in of the Massey Ferguson 374s fruit tractor and purchase of Kawasaki Mule Pro DX at a net cost of £5,995. Cllr Howell seconded this proposal and agreed unanimously.*

*Members were reminded that it had been agreed at the previous meeting to ask F&GP to transfer £10,000 unspent in the previous year to Environment reserves. The Chairman will raise this at the next F&GP meeting.*

At the end of the previous financial year, the Town Council’s income and expenditure was:

<b><u>Year ended 31 March 2016</u></b>		<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>
F&GP	<i>EXP</i>	173,012	108.7	-13,812
	<i>INC</i>	269,361	100.1	358
ENV	<i>EXP</i>	84,304	76.9	25,346
	<i>INC</i>	19,323	85.4	-3,297
ER&TD	<i>EXP</i>	3,072	53.4	2,678
	<i>INC</i>	0	0.0	0
P&T	<i>EXP</i>	8,203	97.7	197
	<i>INC</i>	0	0.0	0
<b>COUNCIL</b>	<b><i>EXP</i></b>	<b>268,591</b>	<b>94.9</b>	<b>14,409</b>
	<b><i>INC</i></b>	<b>288,684</b>	<b>99.0</b>	<b>-2,939</b>

Any unspent budget at the end of the financial year is automatically added to the general reserve. Where income levels are not as expected, the deficit is also taken from the general reserve.

Allowing for these movements, the balance sheet as at 1 April 2016 shows the following:

<u>Reserves</u>	£
Asset Replacement	31,100
Almonry Repairs	10,000
Tree Work	8,815
Memorial Seat Maintenance	400
Fingerposts	5,000
<b>Total Earmarked Reserves</b>	<b>55,315</b>
General Reserve	63,488

- ❖ **Decision required: Members need to decide whether to agree the requests from the Environment Committee**

#### [Agenda item 10 – Financial matters](#)

##### Grant requests

Attached separately are two grant requests received from Battle Festival (£500) and the PCC of St. John the Baptist, Netherfield (£250). For information, the amounts granted to Battle Festival over the last three financial years were:

2015/16	£500
2014/15	£500
2013/14	£500

At the F & GP meeting held on 7 July 2015, it was resolved '*To provide funding of £250 for the PCC of St John the Baptist, Netherfield from the environment committee budget*'.

This was agreed, as since the adoption of the new grants policy, the request from the PCC of St John the Baptist did not meet the criteria as it was for general maintenance and running costs. However, it was recognised that the Town Council already budgeted for the upkeep of other amenity areas in the town, and proposed by Cllr Kiloh that this request for financial support should be dealt with in the same way.

The remaining grant budget for this financial year is **£4,829**.

- ❖ **Decision required: Members need to agree grant award amounts for the above requests**

## Budget reports

The detailed income and expenditure report for the F&GP committee is attached separately, along with the summary report for all committees.

### 3 Year Budget Plan

To complete the business plan and support the aims previously submitted by the committee, a 3 year budget plan for the agreed long term actions needs to be completed by the committee.

While the normal budget lines can be estimated through local knowledge and likely increases in inflationary costs, thought needs to be given to specific projects which will incur large expenditure, and decisions made as to how to fund those.

For reference, included in the business plan longer term future plans of the committee are:

- Continue to review its policies and procedures to ensure that the Council is run in a legal and business-like manner.
  - Continue to review office services to ensure that these are run in an efficient manner
  - Introduce an online payment system for bookings and rents
  - Continue to increase the grants budget in line with inflation
  - Encourage and support organisations receiving or applying for grants to assist them in their activities
  - Collaborate with the Battle Museum of local History to run the Community Heritage Centre.
  - Continue to maintain the Gold Award status of the Almonry Gardens
  - Continue to maintain the fabric of the building
- ❖ **Decision Required: Members need to decide if specific 3 year budget plans are needed for any of the longer term future plans outlined above**