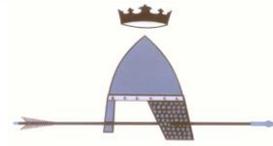




Battle Town Council



**MINUTES of a Meeting of the
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
held on Tuesday, 8 January 2013 at
The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllr R Bye - Chairman
Cllrs: C Bishop, R Harris, Mrs M Kiloh, R Jessop, Ms M-L Neill
and Mrs S Pry.

Cllr Mrs Fisher was also in attendance.

1. Apologies for Absence – None.

2. Disclosure of Interest – As a member of the Memorial Hall Management Committee, Cllr Harris reported a personal and prejudicial interest in that part of item 4 relating to the grant application by the Hall. As the Council's representatives on the Hall Committee, Cllr Bye reported a personal interest.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 November 2012. Subject to the addition of Cllr Bishop to the list of those present, Cllr Mrs Kiloh proposed approval of the minutes, seconded by Cllr Jessop. This was agreed and they were duly signed.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

The Clerk reported that the results of the building **valuation of the Almonry and Chapel/Workshop** had shown both to be under insured. He had challenged the revised **premium** for the Chapel/Workshop which appeared to assume a more intensive use of the workshop area leading to greater risk. Having been advised that the area is mainly used for storage and that a solid wall separates the Workshop from the Chapel the insurers had reduced the premium significantly. **Cllr Bye proposed, seconded by Cllr Ms Neill that Council be recommended to accept the increased annual premium for the Almonry from £361 to £579 and for the Chapel/Workshop from £768 to £933. This was agreed unanimously.**

Regarding **grants**, an application had now been received from the memorial Hall to cover the cost of improvements to the sound system (£413.94) and the replacement of a number of spot light bulbs. Cllr Harris repeated his personal and prejudicial interest in this matter, and took no part in the discussion. Cllr Bye repeated his personal interest and took no part in the vote. **Cllr Jessop proposed that Council be recommended to pay a grant to cover the sound system improvements but not the spot light bulbs, the latter being more in the nature of general maintenance. This was seconded by Cllr Mrs Pry and agreed unanimously by those voting.**

Although no application has yet been received, the Committee also agreed the principle of making the usual payment to Netherfield Church.

The Clerk confirmed that, following the recent Council approval, a contract to carry out repairs to the exterior of the Almonry had been let and that work is now well underway.

5. Correspondence and Communications – None.

6. Budget Report 2012-13

The attached reported was noted. The Clerk confirmed that the latest forecast figures include the cost of the building valuation consultancy but, pending acceptance of the

Battle Town Council

revised insurance premiums, not the additional premium. He also underlined that the figures continue to include forecast income from cemetery fees of £10,000, though achievement of this figure is looking increasingly doubtful.

7. Bank Reconciliation Statement

The attached statement was noted. One of the Treasury Deposit Investment Bonds had matured on 21 December and an urgent decision was required on its investment in a new bond. In view of the urgency **Cllr Bye proposed that the Clerk be authorised to commit to the new bond and that Council be recommended to confirm retrospective approval. This was seconded by Cllr Harris and approved unanimously.**

8. Budget 2013-14 and 3 Year Plan

In the light of the previous Committee discussion and the comments made at the Council meeting on 18 December the Clerk had prepared and circulated a note indicating how an indicative budget of £198,870 could be compiled. This reflected the Services Committee proposal to reduce the previously suggested cemetery fee income by £5000; the impact of the revised insurance premium for the Almonry and Chapel/Workshop and various minor changes where savings seemed possible. Pending the Committee's decision on the level of precept to be recommended, no allowance had been made for potential street lighting energy savings.

Cllr Jessop tabled his promised report relating to potential capital and maintenance costs which might form the basis for determining contributions to a repairs and replacement fund. Whilst the Committee welcomed this and acknowledged the desirability of creating such a fund, Members were reluctant to debate at this stage individual items within the report. It was agreed, however, that the information contained within the report would be a very useful start point for Committees as they consider their element of the 3 year plan.

The focus of the discussion therefore turned to the overall level of the precept. Cllrs Harris and Bishop were clear they could not support anything beyond £200,000. Cllr Ms Neill alerted the Committee to the fact that setting the precept too low could backfire if Town and Parish Councils become subject to capping arrangements in due course. The Clerk reminded the Committee that if the figures in his report were adopted there would be the saving of the £3000 on street lighting energy costs. The revised, additional insurance premiums discussed under item 4 plus a small saving on the actual cost of the cemetery groundwater audit would also release part of the proposed budget. It was agreed that these savings could be reallocated to an initial contribution to the repairs and replacement fund. In practice this would be added to the existing equipment replacement reserve. Concluding the discussion, **Cllr Ms Neill proposed that the Clerk be asked to produce a revised budget incorporating these changes, including a contribution to the reserve but which kept the precept just below £200,000. This was seconded by Cllr Jessop and agreed by a majority.** The revised budget showing a net requirement from the precept is £199,820, as attached.

Looking ahead to the 3 year plan, all Committee Chairmen were asked to give this priority at the next round of meetings with a view to F&GP receiving initial thoughts at the meeting on 4 June. F&GP will review their own activities at the 5 March meeting.

9. Almonry Garden Report

There was nothing to report regarding work in the garden. The Committee agreed that the garden should be entered in the small parks category of the South & South East in Bloom

Battle Town Council

competition.

10. Matters for Information and Future Agenda Items – None.

11. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 5 March 2013

The meeting closed at 8.45pm

**CLLR R BYE
CHAIRMAN**

