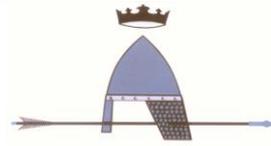




Battle Town Council



**MINUTES of a Meeting of the
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
held on Tuesday, 6 November 2012 at
The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllr R Bye - Chairman
Cllrs: Mrs M Kiloh, R Jessop and Mrs S Pry.

1. Apologies for Absence – Cllrs R Harris and Ms M-L Neill

2. Disclosure of Interest – None.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 September 2012. Cllr Jessop proposed approval of the minutes, seconded by Cllr Bye. This was agreed and they were duly signed.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

All matters were covered under the main agenda items.

5. Correspondence and Communications

All Councillors had been made aware of a letter from District Cllr Angharad Davies on the subject of the **devolution of the car parks** which had effectively indicated that, despite discussions which had appeared to the contrary, a sale to the Town Council had never been something which the District Council would contemplate. Following up the correspondence, Cllr Davies had now indicated that Rother would be pleased to pursue the **devolution of the management of the various open spaces** previously identified. Wary of further abortive discussions the Committee agreed, in principle, to accept this invitation but asked the Clerk to first obtain some indication of the terms which might be on offer, including up to date information about the running costs of the various sites. The Committee also felt that the way in which the car park negotiations had been handled justified a request for the Council to be compensated, in the form of a refund of part of the cost of the exercise to identify income and expenditure relating to activities which might be devolved.

Following the **change of insurers** numerous guidance notes had been received from them offering advice on various aspects of **risk management**. The latest is on the subject of building valuation. The Committee had previously queried the basis on which buildings owned by the Council had been valued for insurance purposes, particularly the Almonry, and subject to discussion of the following item on the agenda, agreed that a valuation fee of £550 to cover both the Almonry and the cemetery chapel/workshop would be justified.

6. Budget Report 2012-13

Based on the latest information the Clerk was able to predict changes in forecast figures with income up by £3485 and expenditure down by £6453. The former takes full account of rents from the Watch Oak and the Almonry whilst the latter includes savings on the Battle's Big Event (Olympics) budget heading and more accurate figures relating to gas and electricity based on a closer study of actual consumption rather than estimates. A summary by Committee is attached.

In the light of this report the Committee authorised the Clerk to go ahead with the insurance valuation discussed under item 5.

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7. Bank Reconciliation Statement

The attached statement at 30 September 2012 was noted.

8. Fees and Charges Review

The Clerk had circulated proposals. **Cllr Bye proposed that these be recommended to Council, as attached. This was seconded by Cllr Jessop and agreed unanimously.**

9. Budget 2013-14 and 3 Year Plan

In the light of the individual Committee discussions the Clerk had circulated full details, by budget heading, of the Council's anticipated core income and expenditure for the next three years. These figures assumed that the Council would wish to maintain current standards of service and made a small allowance for increases in costs where this seemed appropriate. They also assumed that the change to the street lighting regime would go ahead thus reducing energy costs. However, the related expenditure remained to be identified and would need to be added to the core budget. The figures also excluded any further contribution to the equipment replacement reserve beyond the current year. The core figure is £155,370. The Committee then reviewed the various additional items proposed by the Committees whilst, at the same time, taking a view about the amount by which the precept might be increased. Cllr Jessop added to the discussion his concern that no provision exists for replacing equipment, other than machinery or for potential major repairs such as the pavilion roof. He proposed the creation of a sinking fund for this purpose from which the day to day maintenance cost of these items would also be drawn rather than from the main budget.

Focussing on the precept, the Committee felt that the Council's most urgent needs could be accommodated within a 3% increase and that such an increase could be justified particularly if presented in terms of the cost per household (about 2p per week).

In view of a recent condition report, the replacement and repair of street lighting columns seemed the top priority. A meeting with the maintenance contractor is due shortly at which a programme will be discussed including its integration with the physical work necessary to implement changes to the street lighting regime. A provisional allocation of £25,000 was made for this work. The Committee identified a further contribution of £5000 to the Almonry repairs reserve; the long outstanding Telham swing replacement; replacement of the fence at the Cherry Gardens allotment site; consultant's fees relating to the cemetery extension; and a sum to allow a 1% pay award to be made, as the other additions to the core budget resulting in a precept of £193,370.

The resulting draft budget is attached.

Other than the need to make provision for election costs in 2014-15 and training expenditure for any new Councillors, there were no additional 'core' items to add in future years before considering plans for those years though there would remain a commitment to further phases of street lighting repairs.

10. Grants

Two grant applications had been received, the usual one from Battle Area Community Transport and a request from those sponsoring the Battle Schools Greenway project for help towards the cost of a promotional leaflet. **Cllr Bye proposed that Council be recommended to make a grant of £750 to BACT. This was seconded by Cllr Jessop and agreed unanimously. Cllr Jessop proposed, seconded by Cllr Mrs Kiloh, that Council be recommended to make a grant of £150 towards the cost of the**

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Greenways leaflet. In the absence of any further formal requests it was agreed not to consider any further grants for the time being.

11. Policy Reviews

Revised drafts, reflecting further comments made, had been circulated prior to the meeting. Each policy document was considered in turn and minor amendments made. Final draft copies are attached for consideration at the next Council meeting. Regarding the Risk Management report it was agreed that this would need to be followed up by each Committee to review detailed risk assessments. The Clerk had researched costs being charged by other Town and Parish Councils for hard copies of documents requested under the Freedom of Information Act publication scheme, in the light of which the Committee agreed to increase the charge for an A4 sheet from 6p to 12p and for an A3 sheet from 12p to 24p.

12. Almonry Garden Report

There was no formal report from Beautiful Battle. It was understood that the main focus in recent weeks apart from general tidying up has been the planting of several hundred spring bulbs.

13. Matters for Information and Future Agenda Items

It was agreed that the focus must be on progressing the 3 year plan.

14. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 8 January 2013

The meeting closed at 9.40pm

**CLLR R BYE
CHAIRMAN**

