

Minutes of the Estates Committee on Tuesday 21 April 2015 at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade commencing at 7.30 pm

Councillors present: Mr Vic Davies (Chairman), Mrs P Brooks, Mr I Davies, Mrs P Dengate, Mr B Hinder, Mr G Smith and Mr P Sullivan, together with the Clerk.

1. Declaration of Interest or Lobbying.

Dispensation notification for items 4.2, 4.3 & 5: Cllrs Ivor Davies, Vic Davies, Dengate, and Sullivan.

Cllr Vic Davies notified members that for one part of item 10.2, pay increase for litter picker, he will declare a familial interest and leave the room for the duration of the discussion.

2. Apologies and absence.

None as all members were present.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting 10 February 2015.

The minutes of the meetings were **agreed** and **signed** as a true record.

As there were no public or press present the meeting was not adjourned.

4. Matters Arising From Previous Minutes

4.1 Minute 2702/4.1 Boxley Village Green and South Wall. The report on the site visit of 14 April was **received** and **noted**. A brief discussion took place covering:

- The legal responsibility.
- Need to chop and poison ivy roots. It was suggested that Mr Hood be approached to do this work and at the same time remove the self-seeded shrubs (previously agreed) and undertake the same treatment on the ivy on the north wall.
- Need to remove the ivy in sections so that the wall can be repaired/stabilised as wall becomes visible.
- The need to employ a professional company to strip and stabilise/repair the wall. Members' agreed that as this was an extremely sensitive project that section 12.3(f) of Financial Regulations should be enacted. **Action: Recommendation to the Parish Council.** Goodsells should be approached to tender and Cllr Sullivan suggested that Leeds Castle be contacted for details of the company that recently undertook similar work there.
- Possible grants from outside bodies. A search had not found any that were available to apply for.

Members were notified that the repair work on the wall to south of war memorial had been completed.

4.2 Minute 2702/5 Kestrel nesting box at allotments. MBC has agreed in principle to the installation of a kestrel box but will need location and installation details before giving permission. A suitable tree at Dove Hill Wood has still to be identified. **Action: Allotment Working Group & Cllr Dengate.** KWT to be approached for advice on the best position for such a box. **Action: office.**

4.3 Minute 2702/5 Tree maintenance Dove Hill woods. Members' expressed disappointment that after initially agreeing that 2 of the trees were dead/dangerous and would be felled MBC had now changed its mind and no work would be undertaken. It was **agreed** that it was necessary to keep a record of BPC's complaint so if there was an incident there was proof that MBC had ignored the issue. **Action: office.**

4.4 Minute 2703/10 WWG additional storage at Beechen Hall. The tree work application was granted and WWG will carry out the required tree work in time for the arrival of the shed. An application for an 'Awards for All' grant has been submitted to cover 50% of the cost of the shed. **Noted.**

4.5 Minute 2694/4.3 Part-time Caretaker. The new caretaker had completed training and will begin his official duties from 1 May 2015. **Noted.**

4.6 There were no other matters arising from the minutes.

5. Dove Hill Allotments

Cllr Hinder's report was **received** and he informed members that The St Paul's Scouts water bill appeared inflated and a representative spoke to Cllrs Hinder and Dengate about it. The water company has been asked to investigate as it was suspected that the wrong bill was being sent to the Scouts. **Action: Clerk to liaise with St Paul's Scouts.**

It was **noted** that the toilet urinal drainage appeared not to be working properly. The office was contacting the company to try to get the issue resolved. **Action: office.**

FoBW Group will be working in Dove Hill Woods to try to tidy it up. They will be considering, after protecting the road, having a bonfire of the excess cut down brush.

6. Matters for Information

There was none.

7. Assistant Clerk's Report

7.1 Hire fees for February/March with previous year comparison. **Received** and **noted.** Members' asked that their thanks be minuted for the office staff's hard work in getting more bookings in.

7.2 Income and Expenditure. **Received** and **noted.** It was requested that a footnote be added on all future agenda to explain the difference between the figures produced for 7.1 and those at 7.2. It was recognised that this was other income but rather than have this verbally explained at every meeting they would prefer a written explanation. **Action: Assistant Clerk.**

7.3 Account balance as at 31 March 2015. **Received** and **noted.** It was **agreed** that the reserve account money could be increased by up to £15,000 and as the account matures on 21 May 2015 the decision on where to reinvest it will be cleared with members and ratified at the 9 June meeting. **Action: Clerk.**

7.4 Review of Hall Hire Fees. The Assistant Clerk's report and recommendation was **received** and **noted.** It was **agreed** the hire fees would remain unchanged but reviewed at the October meeting. The scheduling of the review would also be considered as some members felt that it should coincide with the review of the next year's budget. **Action: office.**

7.5 Accident Report. None to report. **Noted.**

8. Beechen Hall Extension.

The Chairman gave a brief update on the requirements the working group had identified. Faithdean were being approached to get ballpark figures for a brick built extension and a bolt on extension and once this was received a full briefing will be given to the Estates Committee to enable them to consider whether the work would be justified. **Action: Working Group and office.**

9. Policies and Procedures

9.1 Business Continuity Plan (review). It was noted that the parish council is looking at a resilience & emergency plan for the community. It was felt that the business continuity plan and the community resilience plan should be separate documents.

It was agreed that the current policy was fit for purpose to allow the review to be deferred to the next meeting to consider whether resilience templates were a better design. The Clerk was asked to look at separating the current document into sections

- Incident management.
- Business continuity for the parish
- Emergency rest centre was suggested as an appendix
- Notating the map to show where the storerooms are.

It was confirmed that a copy of the document was supplied to all Estates Committee members and a copy was kept in the Policy & Procedures folder on the office bookshelf. It was agreed that the current folder would be replaced with a bright red one to make it easily locatable. **Action. Clerk & office.**

- 9.2 Staff pay rise and any need to amend hours. Members **received** the report and discussion on the caretaker rates of pay took place covering:
- The excellent standards that the hall was maintained to. The Clerk was asked to pass the congratulations and thanks onto the caretaking staff. **Action: Clerk**
 - The current pay and its relationship to the minimum and living wage.
 - The need to create and maintain a buffer between the minimum wage and the actual pay.
 - Use of bonus and loyalty payments to caretaking staff.
 - Good employer practices.
 - The budget.

After discussion Cllr Dengate proposed seconded by Cllr Ivor Davies **a 2.5% increase for hall staff effective from 1 April. Agreed.**

Member's identified that whilst they aspired to paying a living wage it currently was not felt possible to do so. It was **agreed** that the next meeting would give consideration to creating and maintaining a buffer between the minimum wage and the actual pay. Members' indicated that they would wish any agreement to be back dated to 1 April 2015.

The Chairman, having declared a familial connection left the meeting for the remainder of the item, Cllr Hinder (Vice Chairman) took the meeting.

Payment for litter pickers. The Vice Chairman proposed **the same pay arrangement, 2.5% increase with a review at the next meeting, for the litter pickers. Agreed. Action: office and agenda.**

9.3. No Smoking/Vaping. After discussion members **agreed** that the parish council's policy for the hall and office was **no smoking and no vaping in the premises. Action: office.**

9.4 Housekeeping policy reviews. Hall Bookings cancellations and damage. This policy has been reviewed by the office and is considered still fit for purpose **Noted.**

10. Matters for Decision

None.

11. Date of Next Meeting.

Tuesday 9 June, 2015 at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade, Chatham commencing at 7.30 p.m. Items for the agenda must be with the parish office no later than 30 May 2015.

Meeting closed at 8.57pm

Signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

Chairman..... Date.....