

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF PETWORTH TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER 2014
IN THE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICE AT 7.30 PM

Cllrs Present: Mr Chris Kemp (Chairman)

Mr John Robbins

Mr David Burden

Ms Joan Devine

Mr Richard Chandler

Mr Tony Sneller

Mr Rawden Rogerson

Mr Neville Fox

Mrs Maggie South

Mrs Juliet Fynes

Mr Roger Hanauer

In Attendance: Town Clerk, Mrs Rebecca Knifton

West Sussex County Cllr Mrs Duncton

Member of the press, Miss Amie Gordon

Members of the public x 15

Apologies: Mr Alan Copus

Chichester District Cllr Mrs Lintill

Dr Rosa Pawsey

Mrs Carole Goldthorp

62/14 Representations by the public

There was a public representation by Mr Andrew Howard. He stated that he had been a member of PTC for 16 years between 1995 and 2011 and had also been a member of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. He wished to state that he had always found the previous Clerk to be hard working, effective and always courteous and ready to reply to calls. He stated that in his term of office, he had never had any issues with her production of the finance documents. He stated that contrary to the local Government official audit report, he had personally witnessed that all cheques were backed up with paperwork and had been approved through due process. He went on to state that it was necessary for a Clerk who was part-time to order goods and services and receive deliveries to her personal address. He stated for the record that he believed that the audit was unjust and in his opinion the previous Clerk had been defamed.

There followed a public representation by Mr Gordon Allen. He stated that he had been Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee prior to the previous Clerk's resignation. He stated that he was not happy about the audit report being in the public domain. He noted that the author of the report had only focused on the last two years. He alleged that the current Clerk had only supplied the auditor with limited information. He stated that the reference to signatories in the report should be amended as the previous Clerk had not been a signatory and did not have access to the accounts. He further stated that when the audit had been completed, no ex-members had been asked to respond. He stated that the Clerk had never signed cheques and that PTC had always had robust financial procedures in place. He claimed that all the records existed even though the auditor had said that there had not been enough information and proper procedure had not been followed. He conveyed his concerns over the allegations of the credibility of the previous Council.

There was a public representation by Mr Barry Walsh. He stated that he had been a Councillor for 7 years and had been Vice-Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for 6 of those years. He wished to make it clear that he concurred with the previous representations. He wished it known that at the end of May 2014, PTC had reviewed the Council's Standing Orders and asked why they hadn't been adopted at June's Council meeting. The Chairman made comment stating that the Council had been at a time of change as the previous Clerk had resigned and due to other compliance documents needing to be drafted in conjunction with the Standing Orders, it had been agreed that until a new Clerk had been sourced, the document's adoption was deferred.

County Councillor Duncton stated that she wished to speak as a member of the public. She asked why the previous Clerk, Mr Don Simpson had received a copy of the report. The Chairman stated that Mr Simpson had been consulted on various historic issues and had been invited and agreed to assist.

There was a public representation by Mr Tom Moore who stated that he was an allotment holder. He wished to complain that the website had not been updated. He confirmed that he had been an allotment holder since 2002. He wished to further complain over the notice placed on the gates of the allotments asking for contact information for those who had plots as he found it aggressive. He stated that the notice threatened loss of allotments and that there would be a strong chance of losing their plot if they did not reply. He stated that the new contract was contradictory to the allotment procedures. He stated that he was upset that he had emailed PTC on the 25th of November and had not received a response.

Cllr Robbins responded as the allotment lead and as allotment inspector. He confirmed that all he had been given was a map of each site but that on the ground, the plots have not been officially numbered and that there had been some splitting. He confirmed that up-to-date information had not been readily available and due to this, the Council were unsure of what was current and of who to send out contracts to. He confirmed that there had been no proper filing system for who had paid and that various information had had to be located and made sense of and that the notices were purely to compile a database.

Mr Moore stated that he would not be prepared to sign the new agreement as it was not valid. He accused Cllr Robbins of moving the notice away from the entrance deliberately.

The Chairman confirmed that there had only been two plot holders out of nearly 100 who had considered that the notices meant that they would lose their plot.

ACTION: PTC will respond to Mr Moore regarding his complaint.

There was a public representation by Mrs Anne Simmons stating that she undertook allotment site inspections alongside Cllr Robbins. She stated that the day she had resigned from the Council had been the day that she had been shredded all her Council papers at home.

The Chairman stated for the record that it was a fact that the records were not complete and it had taken the new Clerk and several Councillor volunteers to locate what documents existed and create a proper filing system.

Cllr Sneller began to speak of an article that had been printed in the local paper and was reminded of the Code of Conduct by the Chairman and was called to Order.

Cllr South confirmed that there would be a meeting of the Open Spaces Committee on the 15th of January and that the allotment contract will be discussed.

Cllr Sneller stated that he had not been informed of the change of date due to the Petworth Christmas Fair for the last Open Spaces meeting. The Chairman stated that all Cllrs had been informed and notices had been sent out and displayed. Cllr Sneller was called to Order.

ACTION: Lesley Martin. A request was made for the Coultard paintings to be covered. Lesley Martin to visit the Office in order to assist with suggestions for covering the pictures.

Anne Simmonds wished to apologies for Ken Lintill not being attending as a member of the public.

63/14 Apologies for absence

Apologies received from Cllr Pawsey, Goldthorp, Copus and District Cllr Lintill.

64/14 Declarations of interest

There was a declaration of Pecuniary interest made by Cllr Sneller regarding the totem pole for Rosemary Gardens as the contractor is his son.

65/14 District and County Councillors

District Cllr Lintill sent her apologies but forwarded on the following report:

Local Plan progressing - 2 inspection days left where housing numbers will be revisited following the piece of work done by officers to review our evidence. Nos now proposed 435 per annum over the plan period. I suspect the developers will say it is still not enough! Our communities would not agree.

Free park and ride will operate up to Christmas

Novium museum now has free entry and is offering Christmas activities including letters from Santa!

New anti-social behaviour legislation is now in, a guide is to be produced and I will let you have a copy when I receive it.

Council offices closed over Xmas period but emergency number available - see website.

Janet is to be council's director on the Petworth vision group.

Please wish the council a merry Christmas from me and I hope the lights switch on goes well.

Cllr Duncton reported. She reiterated that CDC are at the inspection process of their Local Plan. She informed members that CDC may have some feedback from the Examiner by early 2015. The issue is that there is a housing shortage and the numbers provided by CDC are not considered adequate.

Cllr Duncton confirmed that she will be arranging for a West Sussex Fire & Rescue representative to attend the Council meeting in January.

She informed members that the County are working hard to help the mentally disabled and are in the process of providing 'places of safety' when incidences occur, rather than a Police cell.

66/14 Chairman's Report and other Announcements on matters requested

- Phone line and Broadband. **NOTED** that the Clerk has now ordered the new BT line but due to the Time Talk account being a residential line in the name of the previous Clerk, they are still refusing to give the MAC Code to PTC.
AGREED that if Time Talk do not supply the MAC Code, a brand new line will be ordered and the Time Talk account closed.
Proposed by Cllr Rogerson and seconded by Cllr Kemp.
RESOLVED
- Wish List/5 Year Plan. **NOTED** that Cllr South had prepared a comprehensive document to highlight the Council's 5 year plan in order to assist the Clerk.
Appendix A had been circulated and **NOTED**.
- Dates for meetings – 2015. Proposed by Cllr South and seconded by Cllr Rogerson.
RESOLVED that the list of meeting dates are approved.
ACTION: the Clerk to upload on to the website.

- Gritters and Salt. Proposed by Cllr Chandler and seconded by Cllr Robbins.
RESOLVED that three hand held gritters as sourced by Cllr Copus are to be purchased at a cost of £250 per machine.
ACTION: PTC to ascertain the key areas to grit.
NOTED that Cllr South suggested that WSCC could sponsor the Council to purchase more and Cllr Hanauer suggested contacting the PBA to see if they would contribute. The Chairman to make enquiries.
- Street Lighting. **NOTED** that WSCC had failed to meet with PTC twice. **NOTED** that SSE had met with the Chairman and the Clerk to discuss costs and design but to date, no costings have been supplied. **NOTED** that County Cllr Duncton had spoken with the Conservation Officer in order to assist PTC with the heritage lampposts. **NOTED** that the original cast iron poles will be retained. Cllr Fox informed members that works had already commenced and was concerned that no schedule had been sent to PTC. The Chairman informed members that a schedule had been received in November when SSE had visited PTC.
Cllr Fox also wished to declare an interest as SSE have installed a new lamppost on his garden path. He had been assured that SSE would contact him back by the end of the day but this had not happened.
ACTION: Cllr Fox to update County Cllr Duncton.
County Cllr Duncton **AGREED** to look into the matter.
- Quick Fix Fund. **NOTED** that the grant for the bollards has been approved by WSCC and that the contractors are due to commence work in early 2015.
- Operation Watershed. **NOTED** that the application for Hampers Common has been submitted and will be going to the next Committee meeting at WSCC. The Clerk to update members when the process has been completed.
- Skatepark update. **NOTED** that Cllr Sneller requested to speak with the Chairman after the meeting.

Cllr Hanauer reported that he had made further enquiries with 10 other Councils who had erected skateparks. Amongst them were Horsham who had reported very positively on the reduction of anti-social behaviour. They had informed Cllr Hanauer that the park was regularly used by all ages of children from between 7yrs to 18yrs and reported that a young community had developed.

Cllr Sneller stated that until a site had been secured, there would be little progress.

- To approve and sign the Clerk's contract. Cllr Sneller again stated that he had not been supplied with a paper copy at the last meeting. The Chairman informed Cllr Sneller that the copies were provided and were tabled for each member to take away.

Cllr Sneller informed members that the Clerk had now forwarded him an electronic copy.
Cllr Fox suggested that PTC should look to obtaining an insurance policy to cover sick pay.

Cllr Sneller stated that he was not happy with the Clerk's title and it should not include Responsible Financial Officer and Executive/Proper Officer. The Clerk informed Cllr Sneller that the role and title of the Clerk is defined in the Local Government Act 1972.

The Chairman stated that the contract was a standard NALC contract which had been supplied by SSALC when PTC had asked for help with recruitment. He further stated that the Clerk was effectively a Civil Servant and statutory guidelines are therefore incorporated into the contract and the role itself. Cllr Sneller wished to reiterate that the Clerk was a servant.

Cllr Fox queried the SCP increase. The Chairman stated that this had been agreed with the Staffing Committee in July 2014 and that SSALC had advised.

Cllr Fynes enquired into references and asked about the probationary period. The Chairman reported that references had been supplied by the Chairman of the Clerk's other Council and the Chief Executive of SSALC himself. He went on to explain to Cllr Fynes that irrespective of the Clerk's first 5 weeks of employment at PTC as a Locum, the official 12 week probationary period had lapsed at the end of September.

ACTION: It was **AGREED** that the contract will be discussed at a further meeting.

NOTED by the Chairman that an implied contract has existed with the Clerk for 6 months and that PTC is in breach of employment law by not providing a written contract.

- Chairman's update on issues not included on this agenda.

Cllr Sneller requested a meeting with the Chairman to discuss the Clerk and her contract.

ACTION: The Chairman to arrange a meeting.

67/14 To confirm the minutes of the Council meeting held on Thursday the 27th of November

Cllr Sneller wished to state that he had proposed not paying for the audit. He further wished to state that he was not upset as recorded in the previous minutes. Cllr Sneller then began to break the minutes down, paragraph by paragraph. The Chairman called Order and informed Cllr Sneller that all comments of fact and fact only that were disputed in the minutes should be sent to the Clerk no later than 24 hours before the meeting.

The minutes were proposed by Cllr Burden and seconded by Cllr South. **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as being a true record at vote of 9 in favour with 2 abstentions.

68/14 Matters Arising from previous minutes not already on this agenda

(a) Defibrillator. **NOTED** that Cllr Sneller had received the drawings. Confirmed that the Martin Dallon Trust is providing a grant. Enquiries into whether the phone box on Grove Lane is still connected to mains electricity.

NOTED that there will be 6 defibs in Petworth in total.

NOTED that the previous proposal by Cllr Burden and which had been seconded by Cllr Rogerson that £200 be set aside towards the costs of the defibrillator is in place.

The Chairman spoke of training in the use of the equipment and the possibility of organising this for the farmers market.

ACTION: Cllr Sneller to deal.

This matter is ongoing.

(b) Tap on the Leconfield. **NOTED** that this matter is ongoing.

(c) Councillor's opportunity to raise matters from the previous minutes not already on this agenda.

Cllr Sneller informed members that he had received a quote through for the proposed totem pole in Rosemary Gardens at a cost of £1,350. The Chairman confirmed that the Clerk had arranged a meeting with Greenspan to get an overall quote for total refurbishment.

NOTED that the Leconfield Estate is engaging with PTC and is very keen to support the Council in enhancing Hampers Common. Cllr Chandler wished to remind members that the new park will be sited further away from the ditch.

69/14 To receive Reports

(a) Finance and General Purposes Committee, to include approval of payments and signing of cheques;

The following list of payments were approved:

Austens	154.54	General Maintenance
C G Kemp	23.93	Xmas Event
Guildford Sound and Light	12.50	Xmas Event
HMRC (Post Office Ltd)	505.39	Clerk's Salary
R Knifton	1,083.85	Clerk's Salary
Naldrett	497.50	Rosemary Gardens Maintenance
Johnston Publishing	78.00	Xmas Event
F Kemp	23.93	Xmas Event
Austens	87.24	Xmas Event
Bexley	176.00	Xmas Event
K Bridle	300.00	Xmas Event
Viking	107.04	Office Expenditure
F Kemp	4.15	Xmas Event
F Kemp	12.50	Xmas Event
N Munn	20.95	Xmas Event

Proposed by Cllr Fox and seconded by Cllr Fynes. **RESOLVED** that the above payments are approved.

(a1) Minutes of the previous meeting. Proposed by Cllr Rogerson and seconded by Cllr Kemp. **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting are agreed as a true record.

(a2) To consider the draft budget.

The following draft budget was discussed:

EXPENDITURE		2014/5 Budget	Total to 30 Nov	Full year forecast	2015/6 budget
Open Spaces	Rosemary Gdns/Hampers Com Contract	5,970	2,985	5,976	6,000
	Rosemary Gardens Maintenance	1,500	1,093	1,200	1,500
	Hampers Common Maintenance	1,200	45	200	1,200
	Hampers Common Lease	300	0	300	300
	Xmas Event - General	2,000	201	2,000	1,500
	Xmax Event - Lighting	0	0	0	1,000
	Hanging Baskets - Maintenance	1,500	1,800	2,100	1,000
	Hanging Baskets - Watering	0	0	0	1,500
	Planters	100	41	41	100
	General Maintenance	750	528	750	2,500
		13,320	6,693	12,567	16,600
Admin	Office Rent & Service Charges	6,700	2,713	5,062	6,700
	Clerk's Salary	10,000	9,498	15,855	20,000
	Additional Clerk's hours				5,000
	Assistant Clerk's Salary	3,600	2,360	2,360	0
	Insurance	1,800	1,964	1,964	3,500
	SALC/SLCC				
	Subscriptions/Contracts	950	841	900	1,100
	Audit Fee	600	1,428	1,700	1,000
	Office Expenditure	500	1,121	1,400	1,000
	Expenses/Postage	400	52	100	400

Photocopier	200	63	100	0
Telephone	350	324	420	500
Office Water	150	104	150	150
	25,250	20,468	30,011	39,350

Misc	Grants Awarded	4,000	2,384	2,384	4,000
	CCTV	5,000	0	5,000	5,000
	Street Lighting	1,750	1,453	1,750	2,400
	Neighbourhood Planning	2,000	0		20,000
	Farmer's Market	500	0		0
	Web Site	300	0	45	300
	Church clock	3,500	976	1,236	200
	Local Election				2,000
	Loan repayment				6,000
	Skate park				10,000
	War Memorial				2,000
	Dog Warden/Dog Bins				500
	Training				2,500
	Contingency	2,000	2,850	3,550	2,500
		19,050	7,663	13,965	57,400

Allotments Lease and Water	1,500	1,097	2,000	1,500
Allotments Maintenance	500	0	100	500
	2,000	1,097	2,100	2,000

Petworth Pages				
Printing/Expenses	3,800	1,870	3,800	3,800
Petworth Pages Distribution	480	240	480	480
	4,280	2,110	4,280	4,280

63,900	38,031	62,923	119,630
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INCOME	2014/5 Budget	Total to 30 Nov	Full year forecast	2015/6 Budget
Precept	57,218	57,218	57,218	111,000
Hampers Common Hire	200	200	200	100
Photocopying	60	13	13	0
Interest	20	14	20	20
Xmas Event		1,045	1,500	1,500
Allotment Rents	2,500	1,422	2,500	2,600
Petworth Pages Adverts	4,500	1,900	4,500	4,500
Totals	64,498	61,811	65,951	119,720

BALANCE SHEET

Reserve at 1 April 2014 - general	3,112
Reserve at 1 April 2014 - for NP	23,000
Reserve cash at 1 April 2014 - for NP	13,300
Less Forecast Invoices paid for NP	-20,000
Income forecast	65,951
Prior year VAT refund	4,858
Less: Expenditure forecast	-62,923
Less: Recoverable VAT forecast	<u>-5,000</u>
Balance forecast at 31 March 2015	<u><u>22,298</u></u>

It was **NOTED** that whilst the budget included many new projects and an additional cost for a proposed assistant for the Clerk, the Precept request would almost double. Cllr Copus explained that there had not been allowances in previous years to build a substantial reserve and that without the increase, the proposed projects would fail.

Member of the public Mr Tom Moore stated that the local food bank served 3 people that morning.

Cllr Hanauer explained that although the increase looked extensive, the actual cost to the Council Tax payer would only increase by a few pounds a month. He went on to state that PTC has a huge amount to catch up on.

The Chairman listened to all suggestions and asked members what they would consider taking out of the budget. With regards to the NP, in this year's budget there had not been allowances made for expenditure for items such as printing, postage etc and although grants are available, these were not a foregone conclusion.

Cllr Fox requested that the budget be taken back to the F&GP Committee in January. **AGREED** by all. Cllr Copus will revisit the figures with the Clerk and email out an amended version in readiness for the next meeting on the 6th of January.

(b) Traffic and Planning Committee. Proposed by Cllr Fox and seconded by Cllr Rogerson. **AGREED** that the minutes of the previous meeting are ratified.

Cllr Fox raised the issue of the proposed change of use to the old HSBC building. Cllr Robbins spoke of concerns relating to the Memorial Garden. It was **NOTED** that Cllr Robbins had spoken to Tim Marchant regarding the letters that had been sent by the previous Clerk but that these had never been forwarded to HSBC. Cllr Fox stated that he had looked at the plans and it appeared that the garden was outside the curtilage.

ACTION: The Clerk to continue to investigate as to what happened to the missing plans from the summer.

(c) Neighbourhood Plan. **NOTED** that the NP had a stall at the Christmas Lights Event on the 6th of December. It is proposed that there will be 3 open meetings in early 2015. **NOTED** that Cllrs Pawsey and Kemp, along with NP Chairman, Douglas Cooper will be attending a meeting at SDNPA to gain an insight into the consultation process. The Chairman asked members whether any additional Cllrs would like to attend.

(d) Open Spaces Committee. **NOTED** that Cllr Sneller wished to complain again that he had not been made

aware of the change of date for the previous meeting. He further stated that the telephone box at Hampers Green was in disrepair.

The previous minutes were Ratified.

Cllr Robbins raised the ongoing issues at Grove Lane with the previous tenant of Plot 7. It was **NOTED** that concerns had been raised for some time and that in recent months, a number of serious complaints from neighbouring Plotholders had been received.

It had been proposed at the previous Council meeting by Cllr Chandler and seconded by Cllr Devine that this tenant should be issued with Notice with immediate effect but that the tenant had submitted a request to address Council.

AGREED that this matter will be discussed at the next meeting.

(e) Petworth Business Association. **NOTED**

(f) Petworth Pages. **NOTED** that Cllr Fynes had attended a meeting with the PBA and that she will remain as editor. All existing advert contracts will be honoured and PTC will retain editorial.

(g) Christmas Event. **NOTED** that the event was a complete success.

MINUTED that PTC records huge thanks to all volunteers for their time and assistance in making the event so successful.

70/14 To consider other items at the Chairman's discretion

MINUTED: Cllr Hanauer wished to record a formal thank you from PTC for all that the Clerk and the Chairman have achieved since taking on their roles in the summer.

Meeting closed – 10.47pm

Signed.....
Chairman