

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF PETWORTH TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON THURSDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2015
IN THE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICE AT 7.30 PM

Cllrs Present: Mr Chris Kemp (Chairman)

Mr David Burden
Dr Rosa Pawsey
Mr Richard Chandler
Mr Tony Sneller
Mr Rawden Rogerson
Mr Alan Copus
Mr Neville Fox
Mrs Maggie South
Mr Roger Hanauer
Mrs Carole Goldthorp
Mrs Juliet Fynes

In Attendance: Town Clerk, Mrs Rebecca Knifton
Members of the public x 10
Member of the press, Miss Amie Gordon
West Sussex Fire and Rescue:
Adrian Murphy, Rob Mapley and Martin Eldridge
Petworth Community Gardens:
Kate Brickell and Caroline Bianchi
Chichester District Cllr Mrs Lintill

Apologies: West Sussex County Cllr Mrs Duncton
Mr John Robbins

6/15 Representations by West Sussex Fire and Rescue and Petworth Community Gardens

1) West Sussex Fire and Rescue

Adrian Murphy gave a brief introduction and apologised for not being able to present his PowerPoint presentation on the big screen due to technical difficulties so could only show it on his laptop. He explained that he is the Head of Fire and Rescue Operations for Chichester North and that he was joined by Group Manager Rob Mapley and Team Leader, Martine Eldridge.

Incidents. How busy is Petworth? In 2013/14 there had been 122 callouts. 19 were primary fires and of those, only 7 attracted 2 pump attendance. He stated that Petworth was one of the safest areas in their patch. He went on to state that there had been 10 small fires, 14 chimney fires, 17 special services (for example, getting a horse out of a ditch), 12 car crashes and 53 false alarms. He wanted to note that Midhurst had 281 callouts in 2013/14.

The station in Petworth is part-time but attendance times only failed 6 times in one year. It was also noted that the Fire Services are now able to cross borders into neighbouring counties.

He wanted to reassure Petworth that the reorganisation of the Fire Service would not put lives at risk. There had been a hatch fire at the Gribble Inn where they had to lift off bails of hay. 24 pumps had attended but only 2 had been needed. Each Scania Engine costs £280k to purchase.

In 2014, there had only been 11 fatalities. He gave examples of 3:

- Goodwood – Highspeed crash into a tree;
- Bognor Regis – Petrol suicide; and,
- Worthing – an elderly man set fire to his clothes from his pipe.

He stated that the majority of deaths are caused by mental health and old age. The modern Fire Service is about prevention and that WSCC's 'agenda' is about helping people.

He wished it noted that one of Petworth's traditional fire engines will be removed but will be replaced by a water carrier and a 4x4. The water carrier can hold 15 tonnes of water.

Midhurst will have a larger vehicle with an ultra-high pressure misting system, inflatable rafts and wetsuits. Engines have now improved and the new batch will come with a new foam system. The Scania's are much easier to replace parts than the old Dennis'.

There will be 6 full-time fire fighters in Petworth. Cllr Sneller asked why all 3 areas were being cut, Midhurst, Petworth and Storrington. Mr Murphy explained that neighbouring Fire Services such as Godalming would be on hand to assist if needed. Members noted that it could take at least 20 minutes to get from Godalming to Petworth. Mr Murphy went on to say that Epsom were now covering Haslemere.

The Chairman thanked Mr Murphy for his presentation.

ACTION: To invite WSCC Fire and Rescue back to update PTC in 6 months.

2) Petworth Community Gardens

A PowerPoint presentation was given by Kate Brickell.

She informed PTC that they were now in their 10th year. The project was to teach organic gardening with mentors and to grow and donate fresh food to all those who can't afford it or don't know how to grow it.

She explained that she had undertaken a training session to become a mentor and was told to go back to her community and set up a community garden of her own. She had started looking for a suitable plot in Petworth and had been informed that John Croakham had 4 allotment plots and was prepared to give up 2.

From the beginning of the project, it hadn't been about food. It was about helping the community to learn and to work with children, disabled people or those with addictions or mental health problems. The idea was access to all.

They have created a children's garden which is regularly visited by local children and schools.

27 frogs live in one of their small ponds and they also promote butterflies, birds and bees. They have a wild flower and sensory garden and encourage companion gardening. They have wheelchair accessibility and have created raised beds.

They have been working with special needs children and it had been a privilege to watch those with limited ability grow and flourish.

The toilet on the site is organic and has wheelchair access.

They firmly believe in social integration and therapeutic horticulture. They are undertaking holiday activities, fetes and other social activities in order to celebrate together.

They also try to make soup from their harvest which they share with all. They acknowledge that 'living' is harder in these economic times and so they have taken on another plot.

Until last year the project had been funded by the lottery but this has ceased. They have received £500 from the Hyde Group and WSCC have agreed to assist with funding for solar panels but from May 2015 there will be no funding at all.

The Chairman stated that the Finance Committee will look at the Council's grant capacity as PTC wish to assist. The Chairman thanked Kate for her representation and informed her that PTC would be in contact.

7/15 Representations by the public

There was a public representation by Mr Gordon Allan who wished to highlight the recent article in the Midhurst and Petworth Observer regarding the previous Clerk. He wished it to be acknowledged that an apology was still due. He stated that the previous Clerk had never signed cheques which contradicted paragraph 6 of the Independent Internal Audit Report.

He further stated that there had been an asset register and an insurance policy.

The Chairman confirmed that he had visited Mr Allan and had asked for a list of all the various complaints that

both Mr Allan and Mr Moore wished to raise and requested that this be sent through. Mr Allan wished for his complaints and the Council's response to be put into the public domain. Cllr Kemp agreed and stated that he would respond in writing.

This will form part of these minutes as below.

Mr Allan's list of complaints:

The following are the issues I raised at the Town Council meeting (19th Feb) in relation to the investigation report dated 30th September 2014 as revised and issued by the Council

1) The Clerk has always maintained that she did not sign cheques on behalf of the Council. The Assistant Clerk in her letter of 6th December 2014 (which was copied to all Councillors) states that the Clerk never signed cheques. The only evidence that the previous Clerk signed cheques would be cheques with her signature on. So my question is: During the review of two years transactions, how many cheques were identified that were signed by the Clerk? If, as I believe, there were none, why was this raised as a problem? (The previous Clerk's signature would have been known to the Bank as she had authority to move funds between accounts. It doesn't mean she signed cheques.)

2) Is it not correct that minutes of all Council and sub-committee meetings suitably signed and dated covering were in the office at the handover from the previous Clerk and present during the audit? Why then does the report which was published after review by the Council imply otherwise? Par 6 of the report. Perhaps in your apology letter you can confirm that these records were present and in order.

3) The auditor states he could find no evidence of an asset register (para 11 – last bullet point of the report) and that the insurance policy was not included in the papers brought to him (para 17). The assistant Clerk (in the letter quoted above) says that before she left she emailed the asset register to two Councillors and put a hard copy into the filing cabinet. The Assistant Clerk also says the same two Councillors had borrowed the insurance document to compare with the asset register. So here are two specific examples of "misplaced" documents which had nothing to do with the previous Clerk. The assumption that the previous Clerk must be at fault because things were missing or misplaced, is false.

Perhaps if the Council's apology letter can acknowledge these points, we can finally close this chapter and everyone can move on. The sooner this is done the better for everyone.

Regards,
Gordon Allan

The Chairman's Response:

1) The Report does not suggest that the Clerk had actually signed cheques and, as far as we are aware, nobody else has suggested that she had. It simply makes the statement that the Clerk should never sign cheques. As we are all aware, in order for the Clerk to make on-line balance enquiries and transfer funds between accounts, the Clerk is indeed a bank signatory but should not be authorised to sign cheques. This should have been stated in the Council's Financial Regulations but, as we both know, the previous Council had not ensured legislative compliance in adopting any such document. We are aware that there were a couple of small sections within the out-dated Standing Orders which gave the Council some limited financial controls but this certainly did not ensure that the processes were fully compliant. It is unfortunate that the previous Council had never undertaken an independent audit which was another reason why an independent audit was required.

2) Again your reading of the Report is incorrect. It doesn't say that any signed documents were actually missing but in effect makes the point that versions held on the website cannot replace the authoritative signed paper documents which must be held securely in the office. It should also be noted that the reference to the current Council only being able to locate electronic documents through their own website, was due to the previous Clerk informing the new Clerk that she did not have any electronic database prior to January 2014. This is unfortunate and, as we know you are aware as the ex-Chairman of the Finance Committee, the

previous Clerk had been given an allowance for the use and storage of the Council's documents on her own computer. As it happened, at the time of the audit, it was not obvious that all signed paper minutes and supporting documents did actually exist in the Councils files as some of the filing and labelling was misleading and in disarray. With the help of our current Clerk and a number of Councillors this has now been corrected and I can confirm that all documents are present. We wish to inform you that the majority of the documents and annual returns which had been filed in our office relating to the previous Clerk's other Council have been returned. The remainder will be passed to Cllr Fox to take to her in person.

3) The insurance policy was not to hand when the audit was undertaken. Obviously the auditor can only audit what is presented to him and at the time we were simply not able to show him the insurance policy. We now know that in fact the documents were being held by Councillor Copus who had totally forgotten that he had them after having dealt with the recent annual renewal. I am not aware that the previous Clerk was being assumed to be at fault over this.

4) The Asset Register question is more complicated. Several different lists of assets existed none of which had been updated recently, were sufficiently detailed, were costed or were linked to the insurance cover. So therefore there certainly was no proper Asset Register in existence. Indeed, we still have no analysis to support the signed off Annual Statement fixed assets value on last year's annual return which has been reported as £72,040, and the same figure had been replicated for the previous few year ends. If you have any recollections as to how that figure was derived, these would be very helpful to us.

I trust that the above explanations now put your mind at rest.

I now consider this matter to be closed and if you have further questions on the Report you should refer them to the author as the Town Council resolved to accept the report as presented.

Regards

Chris Kemp
Chairman of Petworth Town Council

There was a representation by Mrs Anne Simmons who wished to inform the Clerk that her surname did not have the letter 'd' in it. She further stated that she had said that 'she' had shredded all her Council papers when she had resigned and had not accused the Clerk.

8/15 Apologies for absence
Apologies received from Cllr Robbins.

9/15 Declarations of interest
None.

10/15 District and County Councillors
County Cllr Janet Duncton:

It was noted that Council Tax will be frozen for another year.

WSCC are making better use of their land and selling off some for development.

They are actively dealing with repairing potholes within the County and reported that the Government have released several million pounds for improvements to pavements.

7,700 gullies have been cleared.

District Cllr Eileen Lintill:

It was reported that there was an Inter-Authority Fire and Rescue group set up to monitor the changes in the service.

Cllr Lintill wished to remind PTC that she is on hand to help.

CDC have put together their 5 year strategy plan with a fully balanced budget without having to use reserves. The District Council are assisting those with homes who have suffered flood damage. CDC's Local Plan consultation on modification has today ended. She advised members to visit the CDC website which displays the updated corporate plan. Choose Work – CDC's Sarah Bennett is focusing on work placements for those on benefits and creating recruitment for companies.

11/15 Chairman's Report and other Announcements on matters requested

- Phone line and Broadband – still ongoing as BT have discovered an underground fault.
- 5 Year Plan – **NOTED** that Cllr South had collected all the information from the Clerk and has assembled a Plan. PTC must take it further. To form the agenda for the next meeting of Council.
- Cloud – **NOTED** that the Cloud is up and running allowing the Clerk and Cllr Copus to work more from home.
- Gritters – **NOTED** that the gritters have been ordered but the delivery date keeps changing. Cllr Robbins to deal with storage.
- Street Lighting – The Chairman reported on the recent meeting with WSCC's Kevin Moss and SSE's Simon Bushell. SSE are happy to supply the historic lamps/Windsor Style. WSCC have agreed to assist with £6k towards the cost of the purchase and PTC will match this. The obelisk lamp will be corrected and an original style replica will be made and fitted free of charge.
NOTED that the columns are original 1890's but that the swan necks are dated 1920's/1930's. The Chairman asked members what they thought would be appropriate. Should the lamps be replaced in the original 1890's style or the latter.
Proposed by Cllr Hanauer and seconded by Cllr Burden. **AGREED** that the lamps should be restored to the original 1890's style.
- Bollards – **NOTED** that keys for the bollards are situated in the Star and the Post Office.
- Operation Watershed – The works have been completed and the monies should be received by the end of the month. A thank you to County Cllr Duncton for signing off the paperwork so promptly was given.
- Skatepark update – Cllr Hanauer reported that he now had two reliable youth representatives assisting the project. A petition is being undertaken. The proposed pictures of the project have been sent out by Cllr Hanauer. The matter is ongoing.
- War Memorial – the grant is on standby for the works to clean the War Memorial. **ACTION:** The Clerk to liaise with the contractors.
- Police Report – the Clerk read out the following report from PCSO Paul Isaac:
The main issues currently in the WC3 (Petworth and Midhurst) area are firstly the continued trend of Burglary OTDs (Other than Dwelling), so things such as sheds. This seems to be the primary target of the offenders, items such as chainsaws and mowers that are easy to sell on. This is more commonly in the more rural areas such as recently a number of offences in Tillington and Lodsworth, however there have been some instances in more urban town areas. Furthermore alongside these offences there are often also TFUMV (Theft From Unattended Motor Vehicle) offences in the same area and time. This is often targeting vans where tools are stored but can also be searches, of mostly unlocked cars, for items such as cash and phones or satnav systems. Please remember to not leave any valuables in unattended vehicles both at home and out, such as at beauty spot car parks as this also occurs at these locations. In response to this the local Neighbourhood Police Team doing has been doing extra late night patrols in the affected areas. Furthermore we are continuing to do security marking of tools and target hardening premises anywhere possible. I would continue to urge people to report anything suspicious and call in on 101 with any information that you have. If you see a suspicious vehicle then please try to get the index of the vehicle as this helps greatly with our enquiries.
The other issue in the area has been the continued ASB (Anti Social Behaviour) in Petworth town. This included the damage to the gents toilets at the Rosemary Gardens Public WC's. We have been actively moving on any groups of youths seen and taking details of anyone causing any form of issues. Furthermore we are also using the CCTV systems at both the Pound Street car park and Sylvia Beaufoy car park to monitor when people are gathering and gain evidence after incidents,

such as when the toilets were damaged we were able to identify the offenders as two males and one female and the exact time. We will continue to patrol the area of reported issues and continue to disrupt and deal with the group causing issues.

- Chairman's update on issues not included on this agenda
NOTED that there is a petition opposing the cuts to the Fire Service. The Chairman wished to inform members that should they wish to sign it, it will be down to individuals.

12/15 To confirm the minutes of the previous Council meeting

- 11th of December 2014 – The Chairman wished to confirm that going forward, any proposed amendments to the minutes must be sent to the Clerk at least 48 hours before the meeting. **AGREED** that with the amendments to the spelling of Anne Simmons' name, the spelling to the Martin Dallyn Fund and that the Clerk's role is to serve the Council, the minutes are an accurate record of the meeting.

Proposed by Cllr Burden and seconded by Cllr South.

RESOLVED

- 8th of January 2015 - the minutes were agreed as being an accurate record of the meeting.

Proposed by Cllr Fox and seconded by Cllr Goldthorp.

RESOLVED

13/15 Matters Arising from previous minutes not already on this agenda

- (a) Defibrillator – **NOTED** that the Defib at Hampers Green is soon to be erected. The phonebox at Grove Lane is soon to be tested by BT as to whether it still carries electricity.
- (b) Tap on the Leconfield – Still waiting for the planning application to be completed.
- (c) Councillor's opportunity to raise matters from the previous minutes not already on this agenda – None.

14/15 To receive Reports

- (a1) Finance and General Purposes Committee, to include approval of payments and signing of cheques.

Proposed by Cllr Copus and seconded by Cllr Kemp.

RESOLVED

- (a2) Minutes of the previous meeting

9th of December 2014 - Proposed by Cllr Copus and seconded by Cllr Rogerson.

RESOLVED

6th of January 2015 - Proposed by Cllr Copus and seconded by Cllr South.

RESOLVED

Reference to the Finance Meeting was discussed and it was **NOTED** that several Petworth Pages receipts had been mislaid in the first half of 2014.

Cllr Copus had investigated the matter and stated the following:

The mislaid cheque from St Oswalds had been cancelled, reissued and is now banked.

The mislaid payment from Rosewarnes has not yet been reissued.

Two further cheques are still missing with one of those cheque payees confirming that the cheque had been cashed but there was no record of it being paid into the Council's Bank Account.

NOTED that there is still a missing payment of £120.

It was proposed by Cllr Copus that the Council will write off the £120 and pay the PBA £980 in respect of advanced advertising income received by PTC but for future editions being managed by the PBA.

Seconded by Cllr Rogerson.

RESOLVED

(b) Traffic and Planning Committee Minutes

6th of January 2015 - Proposed by Cllr Goldthorp and seconded by Cllr Burden.

RESOLVED

28th of January 2015 - Proposed by Cllr Hanauer and seconded by Cllr Rogerson.

RESOLVED

(c) Neighbourhood Plan – Minutes from the 27th of January 2015 – **NOTED** that an advert for the appointment of a Neighbourhood Planning Clerk had been placed. The interview panel will consist of the Clerk as Proper Officer and Cllrs Copus, Kemp and Pawsey as well as the Chairman of the Steering Group. **NOTED** that the missing grant paperwork located from ex-Cllr Walsh had been submitted to Locality by Cllr Pawsey.

(d) Petworth Business Association. Nothing to report.

(e) Petworth Pages. Cllr Fynes wished for this item to be deferred to the next meeting.

(f) Christmas Events. **NOTED** that the thank you event for all volunteers for the Christmas Event had taken place on Friday the 13th of February. More than 40 people attended, some of which had volunteered for many years but had never been invited before. The attendance was in excess of 40.

(g) Open Spaces Committee. Cllr Chandler confirmed that the skatepark, the defibrillator and the footpath around the hills were still ongoing. The quotes obtained by the Clerk for the renovations to Rosemary Gardens and Hampers Common had been received. Cllrs were asked to highlight what pieces of equipment they thought would be best suited for Hampers Common.

Cllr Chandler confirmed that he was obtaining quotes for a bus shelter at Hampers Common.

The phone box is ongoing.

Litter bins – **AGREED** that this will be left until the new play equipment is installed.

The Plotholder of 3A Grove Lane – The decision to evict stands. Proposed by Cllr Sneller and seconded by Cllr Chandler. **RESOLVED.**

The new contracts as discussed at the working group were approved as previously circulated. Proposed by Cllr South and seconded by Cllr Sneller. **RESOLVED.**

Cllr Chandler wished to minute his thanks to Mr Gordon Allan.

A letter to the previous Clerk is currently being drafted. Proposed by Cllr Fox to give it until the end of the month to respond. **AGREED.**

15/15 Code of Conduct

NOTED that Petworth’s current Code of Conduct was the one belonging to Northchapel and therefore an investigation into what had been adopted by PTC in January 2013 had been undertaken.

The Clerk had redrafted the Code which had been circulated to all members. All members **AGREED** that this was the version they had adopted.

Proposed by Cllr South and seconded by Cllr Sneller. **RESOLVED.** The Code of Conduct is adopted.

Meeting closed – 9.37pm

Signed.....
Chairman