

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD IN ARDEN HALL, CASTLE BROMWICH
ON WEDNESDAY 11TH MARCH 2009
AT 19.30 HRS**

Those present:

Chairman: Cllr J Riordan

Councillors: Cllr Mrs. P Allen Cllr Mrs. A Haywood Cllr A Terry
 Cllr M Hayes Cllr E Knibb

Officers: Mrs. C Tibbles **Public:** 1 member of the public.

1. Apologies.

The apologies from Cllr R Amos, Cllr N Harris and Cllr Mrs. J Smith were accepted for the reasons given.

2. Declarations of pecuniary or other interests.

None declared.

3. Minutes of the previous Meeting.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Cllr Mrs. Haywood, **SECONDED** by Cllr Mrs. Allen, with 5 votes in favour, none against and 1 abstention by Cllr Knibb who stated he had not read them, **IT WAS RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesdays, 28th January and 11th February, 2009 having been circulated, be signed as a true and correct record of the Meeting.

4. Planning Applications.

The Planning Applications received since the last meeting were considered by the Committee and the recommendations thereon are set out in the appendix. A letter had been received from the Spirit Group regarding the Coach and Horses licensing application but the Parish Council had already given due consideration to the application which was being heard by the Borough Council the same evening.

5. Residents' Concerns.

Members noted the circulated information.

6. Working Party Reports.

There were no new reports.

7. Complaints Policy.

Cllr Knibb felt the policy was overdue for review and the Chairman explained that was why it was headed draft and brought to the attention of members for their input. The Chairman was aware that no councillor should ever act alone to investigate complaints and he thought there were three issues to address: complaints from members of the public regarding employees, complaints about council decisions and finally complaints from members of the public or from members about the conduct of members of the council which should be made straight to the Monitoring Officer at Solihull MBC. The Clerk offered to obtain the NALC advice note on handling complaints and Cllr Hayes felt it was important to avoid contradictions when the policy was revised. The policy referred complaints to the Clerk for initial investigation **unless** the complaint was about the Clerk. Cllr Mrs. Haywood recalled a complaint being dealt with successfully by the Staff Panel in 2008. **ON THE PROPOSITION OF** the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Mrs. Haywood, with 6 votes in favour, none against and no abstentions, **IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the NALC model policy/guidance be obtained and used as a basis for rewriting the existing policy.

ACTION

8. Training.

Cllr Hayes suggested that updated training be arranged on council procedures, rules and regulations and should be attended by all members. Cllr Mrs. Haywood supported this request as even though she had attended some training courses it would be invaluable to give everyone the opportunity to revise and go over what was/was not acceptable. The Clerk was aware that a trainer from WALC would be able to deliver a whole council session at Castle Bromwich. Cllr Terry thought that 2 shorter sessions may be preferable to a full day and the Clerk was asked to make provisional enquiries for potential sessions from amongst 15th, 22nd, 23rd or 25th April. Cllr Hayes felt many of the present trials and tribulations could be resolved by the induction training (also offered by WALC on 18th April) on procedures, code of conduct, declarations and a question/answer session on topics requested by members in advance. **ON THE PROPOSITION OF** Cllr Hayes, **SECONDED** by Cllr Mrs. Haywood, with 6 votes in favor, none against and no abstentions, **IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the Clerk make enquiries of members and the trainer regarding costs and availability.

Clerk
18/3

The Chairman asked Cllr Knibb about the 2 recent training sessions he had attended on the Code of Conduct and Visionary Leadership and requested the training papers be passed to the Clerk, in line with the new training policy. Cllr Knibb said he had not attended the Code of Conduct training. The Clerk confirmed her training papers from the valuable WALC Briefing Day were available for members, in accordance with the policy.

9. Councillor Surgeries.

Cllr Knibb said he had been confused by the request of Cllr Hayes to report on this topic and was uncertain what action had been required of him as he thought the Events and Marketing working party were taking over responsibility. Cllr Hayes replied that he had not been confused when making the request following questions at the last meeting which Cllr Knibb had not attended. Cllr Hayes felt that surgeries could give residents a valuable opportunity to be listened to by the Parish Council and to receive assistance, probably for some people in preference to asking questions publicly at meetings. Cllr Mrs Haywood, speaking as a member of the working party, thought that Cllr Knibb would be supplying provisional hall availability dates to them at their last meeting in January or the week before. She personally would not be able to commit to Saturday mornings. The Chairman urged members to find a way forward. Cllr Mrs. Allen added she could not commit time to this project with her other undertakings. **ON THE PROPOSITION OF** the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Hayes, with 6 votes in favour, none against and no abstentions, **IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that advice be sought from WALC/NALC on what could/could not be undertaken by councillors at surgeries and what uptake was achieved by parish and town councils elsewhere. Cllr Hayes offered to research the topic further. The Clerk suggested that Cllr Knibb could ask at the next Solihull Area Committee meeting if there were any experiences to share on this topic.

Clerk
20/2**10. Website.**

The Clerk reported that this would be placed on the agenda at full Council.

Clerk
18/3**11. Arden Hall and Open Space Issues.**

Before considering the quotation from Farebrothers, Cllr Knibb asked why Standing Order 11.1.(h) was not being followed with awarding a contract to the Council Surveyor to undertake the survey of Parish Council buildings as the expenditure was less than

N.B. All Minutes are deemed as draft until formally approved and signed.

£20,000 he expected 3 quotes to be obtained as the work was not required immediately. The Chairman reminded members that the Council had accepted the survey be undertaken in March, although the additional cost for heating and electrical inspections were still awaited. The Chairman clarified that Standing Order 11.1.(a) (ii) stated that surveyors and others were exempt from the requirement of 3 quotes. The Clerk believed the order was for goods or services as referred to in Standing Order 10 and not deemed a contract. Cllr Mrs. Allen understood the Council had earlier made a clear resolution to have the inspection undertaken by its own surveyor as they had a distinct and thorough knowledge of the building and its history. A question was posed about possible prejudice in the report but Cllr Mrs. Haywood felt the Council was protected as this would be a breach of their own professional code as chartered surveyors. The Chairman asked how the costs would be paid and the Clerk replied that the report would not be received until April and payment therefore made in the new financial year, most likely from Arden Hall R&M cost centre. Finally, in line with standing orders and the resolution of the Leisure Services Committee of 4th February, ratified by full Council on 25th February, **ON THE PROPOSITION OF** the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Mrs. Allen, with 5 votes in favour, none against and 1 abstention, **IT WAS RESOLVED** that the survey of buildings be undertaken by Farebrothers as quoted at £1500, with the other costings being submitted to Committee when received. Members discussed the £312 quote for foyer spotlights **ON THE PROPOSITION OF** Cllr Mrs. Haywood, **SECONDED** by Cllr Mrs. Allen, with 6 votes in favour, none against and no abstentions, **IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to delegate the Clerk to seek advice from electricians and if the cost could be reduced to proceed with the work. **ON THE PROPOSITION OF** Cllr Mrs. Haywood, **SECONDED** by Cllr Hayes, with 6 votes in favour, none against and no abstentions, **IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to endorse the LSC recommendations to fertilise all pitches in spring, as suggested by the contractor at a cost of £711.50, as reported at Leisure Services Committee.

Asst
Clerk

Clerk
Asap

Clerk
28/3

12. Payments.

Following scrutiny by members, **ON THE PROPOSITION** of Cllr Knibb, **SECONDED** by Cllr Terry, with 6 votes in favour, none against and no abstentions, **IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the payments as set out in the enclosure, be approved.

13. Clerk's Report.

The Clerk read a letter from the Borough Solicitor issued since their code of conduct training, clarifying the procedure for recording declarations of interest and members noted the current practice at the Parish Council met the requirements. WALC had confirmed that parish councils were not covered by FSA Compensation Scheme for any losses arising due to default of a financial institution and also that NALC/WALC were not authorised by FSA to provide financial investment advice (ref. NALC Policy Briefing P10-08). Members were notified of the new electricity prices for 2009/10 by nPower. Final confirmation of the Salary Award following arbitration meant the interim award of 2.45% (implemented as recommended) would need further adjustment of 0.3% from 1/4/08 to comply with the newly announced figure of 2.75%. Reminders were given about Park Hall consultation meeting on Thursday evening, 12th March; PACT meeting on Thursday evening 19th March. The Civic Service and Reception was confirmed as evening of Sunday 14th June. The Clerk hoped the induction with new members on 12th February had been useful, although aware that it only scratched the surface. She had taken 2 short spells of leave since the last meeting. Research by a member of the public on the War Memorial was continuing with 2 visits held and another arranged. The Youth

Council meeting on 3rd March had been cancelled due to the number of apologies received and the expected co-option forms for 8 new members had been requested from Park Hall School. The auditor had made his first visit and dates arranged to complete procedures in May. The Clerk recorded her concerns about the server which was requiring complete shut downs on an increasingly regular basis. Computer moves were planned at the end of the week, naturally with some disruption to normal work patterns.

14. Village Green access request.

There was nothing to report by the Clerk.