

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON 17TH SEPTEMBER 2003

PRESENT

Mr. Steeples presided over Mesdames Harrison and Holmes, Messrs. Mackin, Gray and Wren.

1. APOLOGIES

Mr. Fletcher.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Mr. Steeples declared his interest on item 3 of the Agenda but stated that there is no financial gain.

3. TOWN COUNCIL GRANT – COMMUNITY HALL

District Councillor Mr. Birt made a request by e:mail to the Town Council for a grant of £1000 per annum towards the running costs of the Community Hall. The Committee is to ask Mr. Birt to produce a Business Plan supported by copies of the Current Account Statement in order that they can consider the matter.

4. ALLOWANCES TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILLORS

The Committee decided that the present system worked very well as all regulations were adhered to and as such they felt there was no need to make changes at the present time.

5. APPONTMENT OF AUDITOR

It was stated that Mr. Rutt had been appointed as Internal Auditor but questions had been raised about the ethics of allowing the previous Town Clerk to be the Auditor. Mrs. Holmes will check on the legality of the situation and report back.

6. BUSINESS CARDS / CERTIFICATES – CLERK

Proofs and costs for the production of the above were shown to the Committee but it was thought that although the quality was good, the costs were too high. The Clerk will arrange for quotes/proofs from an alternative source.

7. CONTRACT / SALARY – CLERK

A 'Model Contract' was shown to the Committee and it was **recommended** that the said contract be perused by Committee members and clerk in order to produce a final contract. The clerk to obtain salary information from the National Association of Local Councils which will be discussed at the next Finance and Policy Committee meeting.

8. REQUISITE NUMBER OF TOWN COUNCILLORS

Information has been sought from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services of Mid Beds DC as to the requisite number of Councillors required to form a Council. The District Council stated there was no case in Shefford to increase the present number of Town Councillors and they were very unlikely to be convinced otherwise. They further stated that Biggleswade Council 'managed' a population of over 16,000 residents with 15 Councillors whereas the population of Shefford was just over 5,000 but still with 15 Council members.

9. APPROVAL OF COSTS TO POLLARD TREES ON THE MILLENIM GREEN

A complaint has been received from a resident in Purcell way regarding an Ash tree and a Willow tree that had branches extending very close to his property. The Town Council have received a report from the Arboricultural Department of Mid Beds D C on what remedial action needs to be taken and further sought a quotation from Countryside Tree Specialists which was accepted. The work is to be carried out in due course.

10. REPORT ON TOWN PLAN

11.

Mrs. Harrison gave a report on a meeting she attended on 13th August regarding the Town Plan and then added additional updates.

12. LUCAS WAY PLAY AREA

A letter has been received from Aragon Housing Association asking for the commuted sum that the Town Council requires for the future maintenance of the play area. Clerk to speak to Lisa White (Play and Open Space Officer – Mid Beds D C) for the appropriate formula.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A question was asked on the suitability of closing off part of the Old Bridge car park for use by skateboarders. It was decided that this was inappropriate and would be a further nuisance to residents.

It was noted that school buses were still using New Street as a route to the school. Clerk to speak to Bus Contracts division at County Hall.

There is a move to arrange 'A Night at the Proms' at the MUGA. The committee asked for plans and costs.

Letter to be written to Shefford Saints FC (Juniors) regarding moles on the football pitch. Because of the nature and delicacy of the reply a copy will be sent to Knowles Benning Solicitors for their comments prior to sending to the Saints committee.

It was decided to form a small sub-committee to seek information on maintaining and sponsoring of roundabouts. There was a suggestion that working parties could be formed to deal with emergency and other issues. To be discussed at the next meeting of the Services and Maintenance Committee.

No further developments on the possible relocation of the Council Chamber.
The meeting closed at 9.25 p.m.