

WADHURST PARISH COUNCIL

THE MINUTES OF WADHURST PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM ON THURSDAY 18th MARCH 2021 AT 7.30PM

Present: Cllr C Moore (Chair), Cllr Crawford, Cllr Murphy, Cllr Smith, Cllr Griffin, Cllr Morris (1934 hours), Cllr P Moore (in part) and Cllr Gadd.

Also, in attendance: Claudine Feltham (CF) (RFO/acting Clerk). There was one member of public present.

MINUTES

1. To receive apologies and reasons for absence.
Apologies were received from Cllr P Moore as he had family commitments, and from Cllr Tincombe as she is a keyworker. However, Cllr P Moore was able to join the meeting from 2120 hours.
2. To receive declarations of personal, prejudicial and disclosable pecuniary interests on items on the agenda and updates to members' register of interests.
Cllr Crawford declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 7.9 as he is a paying member of the tennis club.
Cllr Gadd retrospectively declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 7.12 as a trustee of the WIHF CIO.
3. Public Forum – time limit 15 minutes.
Guy Milner from Wadhurst Tennis Club spoke about the financial elements of the tennis club. Members had paid their renewal fees in April 2020; however, they had seen a loss of 44% of their playtime due to COVID lockdown restrictions. Subsequently some members had enquired if their next year's membership fees would see a reduction. Guy Milner asked if the parish council would consider a reduction in rent to help toward this.
Cllr Griffin asked if there were any grants available from WDC or the LTA – none that Guy was aware of. Cllr Gadd advised there were potentially grants that the parish council could apply for. (This subject would be considered at agenda item 7.8).
4. To consider, and approve if appropriate, which agenda items are sufficiently confidential as to warrant exclusion of members of the press and public under the provisions of the Public Bodies (admissions to meetings) Act 1960.
Members agreed to consider agenda item 7.14 confidentially
5. To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and resources Committee on the 17th December 2020 as a true record.
Members reached a unanimous decision for the minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee held on the 17th of December 2020 be approved as a true record.
6. To determine matters arising from previous minutes for updating and noting.
Precept; decided upon and approved by full council in January 2021.
Toilet scheme; being considered at this meeting.
*Lawyer; ongoing. **Action:** Clerk to add this as an agenda item for the next Finance and Resources meeting.*
Tennis Club fees: being considered at this meeting.
7. Items for decision and allocation of resources if necessary
 - 7.1 Review of annual charges (Pavilion, Tennis Club, Football Club, Allotments) – Cllr Gadd.
Clerk comment: this was a duplicate agenda item and will be considered at agenda item 7.7.
 - 7.2 Expenditure for IT support for the Clerk.

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The Clerk/RFO advised that when urgent IT issues arise there was a local IT Consultant (Mike Goss of Citta Consultants) who could provide IT support at £40 per hour, charged at 15-minute intervals. **Resolved:** Cllr Gadd proposed that Citta Consultants could be used by the Clerk/RFO when required, this was seconded by Cllr Crawford and members reached a unanimous decision to approve this.

7.3 Income from the Community Toilet Scheme – Cllr Gadd.

Update: WPC have not received the new agreement from WDC yet. Cllr Griffin asked if the agreement had to be between WDC and the parish council, or whether it could be direct with Wadhurst Institute Hall and Field CIO. Cllr C Moore advised that there was a shortfall in the funding between what was received from WDC and the costs involved, so it was better to stay with the parish council for the management of the expenditure. Cllr Morris added that when this was considered previously the costs were far too high for another organisation to take on and would be difficult to manage the level of service. Cllr Griffin enquired how long the new agreement from WDC would be for, and that ideally this would tie in with the cleaning contract dates. **Action:** Clerk to chase WDC for the agreement that should start 1st April 2021. All members decided that once the agreement is received from WDC that this should be passed to the Amenities Committee for consideration. **Action:** Clerk to add this as an agenda item for the 20th May 2021 Amenities Committee meeting.

7.4 Moody Sewage price increase.

The Clerk/RFO advised that she had received notification from Moody Sewage that their process would be increased by 5% from 1st April 2021, due to a rise in their costs. **Resolved:** all members accepted the 5% increase.

7.5 Office 365 as a solution for email management – Cllr C Moore/Cllr P Smith

Cllr C Moore commented that the majority of the parish councillors had suffered issues with the email accounts, which was largely due to the limited amount of storage that NetWise allow. A move to Office 365 would increase storage and minimise issues, as well as give a suite of Office products including shared calendars and the ability to share documents. It is an efficient and robust system. It also offers Teams for remote meetings, so would mean that we didn't have to subscribe to Zoom after our current 12-month service expires. Cllr Murphy enquired why we would need to do this when most had some form of Microsoft Office on their computers. Cllr C Moore explained that we would need this set up for the parish council emails, where one drive would be entirely separate for parish council use; emails and documents, and so could then be divided from Cllrs personal documents and emails. Documents and emails would be saved via the cloud. **Resolved:** Cllr C Moore proposed that the parish council move to Office 365 via Element Hosting who work in collaboration with NetWise (as per the proposal which was included within the supporting papers document), this was seconded by Cllr Gadd and members agreed. **Action:** Clerk/RFO to check the budget to see if there are available funds, but if not, for this to go to April's full council meeting for approval of expenditure from general reserves.

7.6 To agree for Cllr C Moore to (physically) sign the bank statements and bank reconciliations for June to March 2021. **Resolved:** Cllr Gadd proposed for Cllr C Moore to physically sign the documents, this was seconded by Cllr Smith and reached unanimous approval.

7.7 Review of annual charges (Pavilion, Tennis Club, Football Club, Allotments) – Cllr Gadd.

The current hire charges for use of the Pavilion were considered and giving consideration to the current financial climate it was considered that the prices would stay as they are. **Resolved:** This was proposed by Cllr Gadd, seconded by Cllr C Moore, and reached unanimous approval from all members.

The Tennis Club charges are already set out and agreed within the contract between them and Wadhurst Parish Council, so remains the same.

Wadhurst Football Club charges are already set out and agreed within the contract between them and Wadhurst Parish Council, so remains the same.

The charges for Round Oak Allotments Association are already set out and agreed within the contract between them and Wadhurst Parish Council, so remains the same.

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7.8 Tennis Club income figures (including electricity and Pay and Play)

Cllr Gadd explained to members that she had been looking at figures relating to the tennis club rent, electricity and pay and play, but there were some anomalies. The current contract (signed 2016) stated that inflation should have been first allocated in April 2017, with annual prices reflecting this, and each year the new inflation figures added in. However, the previous RFO did not add on inflation costs until 2018, and subsequently the amounts charged each year reflected this. When Cllr C Moore looked at the correct prices for the tennis club to be charged in 2020-2021, she worked this out based on interest starting from April 2017. The question is whether we continue to charge them based on the previous RFOs calculations (with interest starting April 2018) or do we correct the previous years? The invoice sent by the new Clerk/RFO is based on the interest calculations from 2017, but we need to decide if this is how we want to proceed, if not we may have overcharged them.

Cllr Griffin and Cllr Murphy both commented that we should not go back to rectify the charges, but to correct this for future invoices.

*Members commented that it would be best to prepare a schedule showing what should have been invoiced, what was actually invoiced, and what was actually received. Cllr Gadd had created a paper on this, but this hadn't arrived with the RFO or other members. **Action:** Cllr Gadd to forward her paper to the Clerk/RFO, and for all information to be collated into a document for clarity. All members agreed that this should then be considered by the Amenities Committee at their next meeting on 20th May 2021. **Action:** Clerk/RFO to prepare document and include as agenda item for Amenities.*

7.9 Tennis Club rent during lockdown – Cllr Crawford (This item taken by Cllr Gadd as Cllr Crawford had declared a personal interest due to be a paying member of the tennis club).

Cllr Gadd referred to the comments made by Guy Milner from the tennis club, at the beginning of this meeting, asking for the parish council to consider a reduction in rent as they had lost so much play time due to COVID restrictions.

*Cllr Gadd also advised that there had been an opportunity to apply for a grant from WDC during the first lockdown, but this wasn't applied for by the previous Clerk, as the tennis club had confirmed that they would be paying their subscriptions. However, nobody envisaged the COVID lockdowns to go on for such a long time. The parish council will be looking to see what grants can be applied for from WDC. Cllr Murphy asked if any other Pavilion users had asked for a reduction. There had not, but the football club had received a grant directly from WDC. Cllr Crawford advised that a local cricket club had also received a grant from WDC. **Action:** Clerk/RFO to see if there is any information on grant applications and to pass this to the tennis club. **Action:** Clerk/RFO to see what grant applications could be submitted by the parish council. **Action:** add as an agenda item for further consideration by the Amenities Committee at their next meeting.*

7.10 Request from Wadhurst Tennis Club to raise the limit regarding excess payment on subscriptions.

*Cllr Gadd advised that in the contract between the tennis club and the parish council there is a clause that if the subscription figures go above £15000 then the tennis club should pay an enhanced rental fee to the parish council. However, the figure of £15,000 was set in 2016 and does not increase with inflation. Cllr Morris proposed that this is considered by the Amenities Committee at their next meeting, along with the other considerations for the tennis club, this was seconded by Cllr C Moore and received unanimous approval for all members. **Action:** Clerk/RFO to add as an agenda item for the Amenities Committee meeting to be held on 20th May 2021.*

7.11 Salaries appearing on the payment list.

*The Clerk/RFO advised that in her previous parish council roles she had always included salary details within the RBS payment analysis report and had considered this to be an open and transparent method. Clerk/RFO had checked with the Caretaker and he also did not have issue with his salary appearing on the payment list. **Resolved:** Cllr C Moore proposed that the Clerk/RFO include the figures on the payment list, this was seconded by Cllr Gadd and reached a majority approval.*

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7.12 Terms of payment of toilets cleaning contract

Cllr Gadd declared a personal interest in respect of this item as she is a trustee of the WIHF CIO.

Cllr Crawford took over as Chair for this agenda item.

*The Clerk /RFO advised that whilst the contract had been agreed with the new contractor, we needed to formally approve that the WIHF CIO would send a monthly invoice, in arrears, to the parish council for payment. **Resolved:** all members approved this. Comment from Cllr Griffin: future tender adverts will include the payment terms.*

7.13 Review of the fixed asset register

Updates: Cllr Morris confirmed that the Duck House had been removed some years ago.

Cllr Morris also confirmed that there was no documentation to show that the bench at the end of the footpath belonged to the parish council, and as such should not appear on the asset register.

Cllr Murphy queried the value of the bus shelters, Cllr P Moore confirmed that in fact the bus shelter opposite the war memorial cost approx. £7,000.

Clerk/RFO to check that the bus shelter opposite the war memorial is on the asset register and is listed for the correct value.

The projector and screen at Carilion Cottage do belong to the parish council, however the screen is broken, and this should be reflected on the asset register.

*Cllr Crawford enquired if the parish council owned the tennis floodlights. The Clerk/RFO advised that these belong to the tennis club, as she has seen them on their accounts. **Resolved:** Cllr C Moore proposed that all present provide updates on the asset register to the Clerk/RFO, this was seconded by Cllr Gadd and reached unanimous approval from all members. **Action:** Clerk/RFO to make above amendments to the asset register.*

7.14 Vacancy for a Clerk to the Parish Council – Cllr Gadd

As this is a private and confidential matter full details should not be discussed over Zoom.

***Resolved:** Cllr Murphy proposed that all matters relating to the appointment of the new Clerk to be delegated to Cllr C Moore, Cllr Gadd (when available) and Cllr Smith, assisted by Claudine Feltham, this was seconded by Gadd and reached a majority approval. Cllr Morris voted against the proposal.*

7.15 Thank you to volunteers.

*Cllr Gadd explained how she felt that the parish council should thank those that had directly helped the parish council (for example The Wadhurst Warriors who did a fantastic job with the Christmas lights). Cllr Murphy commented that whilst she thought this was a great idea, she would be concerned that some may feel left out. **Resolved:** Cllr Murphy proposed that this is considered by full council, this was seconded by Cllr C Moore and reached unanimous approval.*

7.16 ESALC and NALC subscriptions

*Cllr Gadd advised that the previous Clerk renewed this automatically last year, however, the council should be asked if they wished to renew. The Clerk/RFO gave an overview of the changes to SSALC. Cllr Morris suggested we continue our membership with NALC and ESALC for another year. Cllr Gadd added she was surprised at the high costs of the subscription invoice. Cllr Murphy enquired whether Wadhurst should consider joining Kent Association instead. Cllr C Moore proposed that we establish the level of service to expect from ESALC, as well as the prices and service from Kent and consider this at the April parish council meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Morris and reached a unanimous agreement. **Action:** Clerk/RFO to contact ESALC and Kent Association of Local Councils and add this as an agenda item for the next parish council meeting.*

7.17 Football Club agreement – inflation

Cllr Gadd advised that as part of the Football Club agreement inflation should have been applied each year since 2008, however, this had never been applied to their invoices. Cllr P Moore suggested that during the financial climate and COVID restrictions this would not be a good time to

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increase their payments. Cllr Morris commented that he was surprised that this had not come to light sooner. Cllr Gadd explained that she had been working through all the contracts. Cllr Murphy thanked Cllr Gadd for all the time she had spent looking into these issues. Cllr C Moore added that with Office 365 it would assist with the sharing of such documents and information. Cllr C Moore proposed that this be considered by the Amenities Committee, this was seconded by Cllr Crawford and reached unanimous approval by all members. **Action:** Clerk/RFO to produce figures on what should have been paid if the inflation had been applied each year and add this as an agenda item to the Amenities Committee meeting.

- 7.18 Financial year end. Committee Chairs to consider movement of funds to EMR and expenditure for accrual.
Action: Cllr C Moore asked for each of the Committee Chairs to look at their budget figures and consider if they wanted any funds moved to Ear Marked Reserves (EMR), and to provide this information to the Clerk/RFO. **Action:** agenda item for full council on 8th April 2021 to consider movement of funds. It was queried whether the Public Works Loan Board should be settled in full. The Clerk/RFO had previously obtained the settlement figures including the early repayment redemption amount. **Action:** Clerk/RFO to resend the figures to Cllr C Moore for consideration. The parish council had previously agreed for £25,000 to be moved into an EMR for the potential Washwell Lane play area. **Action:** Clerk/RFO to create this EMR and transfer £25,000 from general reserves.
8. Items for noting
Making tax digital – verbal update from the RFO: Despite three attempts to update the parish council's contact address to the Pavilion, the online service for HMRC still had the previous RFOs home address as the contact address. Because of this it would not accept the request to 'Make Tax Digital'. The RFO has submitted a change of address form in the post to HMRC and will register to make tax digital once the address has been updated. Then the councils finance system (RBS) can be updated to submit all tax returns directly, which will now be done within the new financial year.
9. Urgent issues at the discretion of the chair for noting or inclusion on future agenda
Cllr Gadd advised that the parish council had received a £100 donation from a parishioner who had suggested the donation be used for sports/recreation as COVID causing time of hardship to others. Cllr Gadd suggested maybe this could be used towards the costs of another piece of adult exercise equipment. Cllr C Moore proposed that the Amenities Committee should consider what the funds should be spent on, this was seconded by Cllr Gadd and agreed unanimously.

Meeting closed 2139 hours.