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**STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES**

MINUTES of a meeting of the FINANACE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 23rd September 2020 using the Zoom platform

**PRESENT** Cllr J O’Brien (Chairman), Cllrs M Caton, M Jessup, A Khan, F Richards

and G Sell

**ATTENDING** Mrs Emma Philbrick – Admin Assistant

 Cllr J Hudson

**389 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from the Clerk Ruth Clifford

**390 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –** None

**391 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4TH MARCH 2020**

**RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the meeting held on 4th March 2020 as a true and accurate account

**392 MATTERS ARISING**

Cllr O’Brien spoke regarding the following:

**Black Bridge Footpath** – Network Rail replied to our approach to ask for the clearance of the vegetation from the footpath between Water Lane and the Black Bridge and work was carried out during August. On inspection, it was noted that all the cut debris had been left on site and clearance was not as extensive as hoped, leaving a dark area which does not offer a clear view of the path up on to the bridge.

Unfortunately, there was no contact with regard to our proposal for arranging a site visit to assess the possibility of installing some form of lighting on the bridge or to discuss other safety issues.

One possible topic for discussion with Network rail is the possibility of the PC taking over responsibility for clearing ground between Water Lane and the Black Bridge path to ensure good lighting from our recently installed twin streetlamp which is intended to spread light up to the bridge.

One possibility could be we purchase the area for a nominal fee, say £1 or take a long lease of negligible rental.

I wish to propose that this council continues to seek a meeting with Network Rail to discuss removing the barriers to a safe environment for members of our community to walk between Water Lane and West Road.

This was seconded by Cllr Sell and unanimously agreed

**Day Centre** – We have a disadvantage of not having any drawings or plans of the building as these were lost on transfer between Uttlesford and the Parish Council when ownership was gifted to us. This has caused significant issues as we are not in a position to understand the true dimensions of the structure. The replacement doors and windows have been installed but, because of Covid, we are not in a position to reopen the building for use by members of

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our community. We are awaiting guidance from Uttlesford, but it seems that, at the moment they do not generally consider reopening now s safe and are looking into the new year to reopen centres.

The Day Centre Management Team has already received a request from a community group to use the Day Centre. The issue for us is that the building requires redecoration work. Should the building be made available for hire this would require a deep cleaning process after each use, especially with regard to the number of soft furnishings there and we have to be sure this was a thorough clean.

After discussions between members it was agreed that the Parish Council does not feel it can safely offer the Day Centre to groups at present. It is too risky especially with Covid-19 rising again and the Parish Council would take its lead from UDC who are not opening yet.

**The Windmill** – work has been carried out to repair the mechanism for adjusting the angle of the sails and a new mechanism, with which to facilitate the manual turning of the sail structure, from the ground, has been partly completed.

It is a shame that 2020 has brought about a cancellation of their annual fete.

**The Youth Centre** - Owing to Covid regulations the premises was not allowed to hold its usual evening gatherings. An email offering the use of a “Covid Compliant” space at the Youth Centre for small groups, at daytime, has been received, but It was felt that, before such an offer was accepted, risk assessments would need to be carried out and that all groups involved were made aware of their responsibilities.

**393 CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

A copy of the report is attached

**Flash Flooding –** Cllr Caton advised that she had been informed that the drains had been cleared by Essex Highways and that one local business in Lower Street had witnessed this being done. Cllr O’Brien had met with a specialist who was present during one of the downpours and they thought that it may have been just the pots that had been cleared and not the lines. After some discussion it was agreed that the first step should be for Cllr Sell as the Chair of Highways to request a zoom meeting with Kevin Bentley Chairman of Essex Highways as well as County Cllr Ray Gooding.

**Noticeboards –** Cllr O’Brien advised the meeting that he felt a noticeboard would be better placed at the opening of Croasdaile Road and not Hargrave Close.

After being proposed that additional noticeboards be funded by Cllr O’Brien and seconded by Cllr Jessup it was

**RESOLVED** to accept the recommendations by Open Spaces to install two new noticeboards but to ask them to reconsider the location of Hargrave Close.

This was unanimously agreed

**394 FINANCE**

**a PAYMENTS FOR AUTHORISATION -** None

**b VAT Return to 30th June 2020 -** Circulated by Email

**c Income and expenditure statement to 31st August 2020 -** Circulated by email

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**395 LIGHTING**

**a OUTAGE REPORT -** Two lights currently not working – one in St John’s Lane and one in St John’s Road

**b GENERAL –** Nothing to report

**396 GRANTS – TO CONSIDER AWARDING COMMUNITY GRANTS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE FUND**

The Clerk forwarded a report to members explaining how much of the budget was left, who had been awarded grants already and how much, who had applied for grants and which companies the Parish Council had written to for more information before the Committee would consider their application.

The report advised that two new grant applications had been received.

 These were from St Mary’s Primary School for a contribution towards their proposed allotment garden and from the Footpath Strimmers Group for funding to purchase strimmers and associated safety equipment.

Support for Sight had applied but the committee then asked for evidence of how many parishioners are supported by their work. They responded to say that there are 22 registered users and they assist others who just want information, advice or guidance but don’t want to formally register. Cllr Maureen Caton declared an interest as Cllr Melvin Caton is a trustee for Support for Sight.

It was advised that District Councillors A Khan and M Caton were giving St Mary’s Primary School £500 (£250 each) out of their personal budget to the school towards their allotment garden. Cllrs Sell and Caton commented that they would like to see the school raise some of the money themselves and it was also commented that as they were a Church of England school that they should be looking to their Diocese for some funding. Cllr Richards felt that as The Forest Hall School was only awarded £500 towards theirs that the same or less should be awarded.

Having been proposed by Cllr Caton and seconded by Cllr Richards it was:

**RESOLVED** to award a grant to St Mary’s School of £350 and award £200 to the Footpath Strimmers Group.

This was unanimously agreed.

Discussions took place regarding the application by Support 4 Sight. Cllr Sell commented that they are currently going through turbulent times and their office in Saffron Walden has gone but the work they do remains. He had spoken to parishioners who had been helped by them and the need is there.

Cllr Caton and Cllr Sell both agreed that they are not convinced of how much work they were doing in Stansted.

It was agreed that no grant would be offered to them until they showed more evidence of the work, they were carrying out in the Stansted Community.

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**397 STAFF MATTERS**

Cllr Richards advised that both sets of minutes from the Personnel meetings had been circulated. She had sent a letter to Mr & Mrs Hagon and had not had a response. Cllr Khan asked if the matter was now finished? Cllr Richards confirmed that as far as the Council are concerned that this has been investigated and concluded.

Cllr Jessup asked if the interviews for the Receptionist role had taken place. Cllr Richards updated that they had done three interviews but that the person who had been offered the job had declined as they had been offered another role which suited them more. She now needs to speak to the Clerk on her return from holiday to decide the next step forward.

**398 DAY CENTRE -** This was covered in the Chairman’s report

Cllr Jessup asked if it would be worth getting architectural drawings done for the future especially if the Parish Council wanted to extend at some point. Cllr O’Brien agreed to get quotes.

Cllr Caton asked for it to be put on record that although she understood that quick action needed to take place with the emergency works on the Day Centre but she had asked for a commissioning and procurement policy and guidance to be put in place for any similar future issues where emergency expenditure was to be actioned.

**399 WINDMILL -** This was covered in the Chairman’s report

The Chairman advised that estimates are awaited, for the improvements to the grounds around the Mill.

**400 YOUTH CENTRE**

Cllr Caton confirmed what the Chairman had said in his report that the Youth Centre was not able to operate normally as Covid regulations prohibited large gatherings. Gemini were doing outreach work, but she thought this work was limited and not reaching the majority of the youth that attended the Youth Centre before lockdown. The PCSO has also said she would support outreach visits by the Youth Centre staff if she were aware of their date/time and location. A UDC Initiative scheme to help supply volunteers to local groups had been distributed to all organisations in Stansted but only two responses had been received which was disappointing. This did not include the Youth Centre although they had been chased.

A Youth Council was being set up and the Youth Centre Leader was disappointed that the age ground started at 13 and not 11. Cllr Caton had explained that 11 years olds are normally busy settling into their secondary schools – able to be out later in the evenings etc. 13 years was agreed to be the lowest age.

Cllr Caton advised that in future we may need to review what we would like to see delivered from the Youth Centre and what and who we need them to support.

Meeting Closed at 8.20pm

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**ACTION POINTS**

392 – Cllr O’Brien to seek a meeting with Network Rail

393 - Accept recommendations by Open Spaces but ask them to re-consider the Hargrave Close location – Cllr Barnes

393 – Cllr Sell to request a zoom meeting with Kevin Bentley and Cty Cllr Ray Gooding

398 – Cllr O’Brien to obtain quotes for architectural drawings of the Day Centre