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

MINUTES of a meeting of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 27th October 2021 at The Mountfitchet Exchange, Crafton Green, 72 Chapel Hill, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex

**PRESENT** Cllr J O’Brien (Chairman), Cllrs M Caton, J Hogg, J Hudson, M Jessup, G Sell

and T Smith

**ATTENDING** Mrs Ruth Clifford – Parish Clerk

Cllr L Prior

Cllrs A Barnes, P Davies, A Guney and A Khan – via Zoom

Communications Officer – D Schlanker Esq – via Zoom

1 member of the public – via Zoom

**225 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr F Richards as she is on holiday.

Having been proposed by Cllr Jessup and seconded by Cllr Smith it was:

**RESOLVED** to accept the apologies from Cllr Richards

This was unanimously agreed

**226 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST -** None

**227 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15th SEPTEMBER 2021**

**RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2021 as a true and accurate account

**228 UPDATE ON PROGRESS SINCE THE LAST MEETING**

Covered under agenda items.

**229 CHAIRMAN’S REPORT** - see attached.

With regard to the flood issues raised, Cllr Caton asked if this would be raised with the local press? The Chairman confirmed that it would and, as suggested by Cllr Sell, the assistance of our MP would be sought in securing progress from the Environment Agency. Cllr Hudson noted that the Mott McDonald reports from 2016 did not propose cures for the flooding but measures to reduce. The Chairman commented that these had not included Natural Flood Management (NFMs) which has been investigated since being proposed by the Parish Council following successful projects elsewhere.

**230 LIGHTING**

A Outages – Cllr Hudson reported that the light outside 63 Lower Street appears to have issues. The Clerk was aware of outages in High Mead and Manor Road. There are outages on a section of Church Road which appear to be a supply problem rather than bulbs and, should this prove to be the case, our contractor will notify UK PowerNetworks.

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B General Lighting – the Chairman reported that he has again raised the issue of the lights in Water Lane and across the Black Bridge with Network Rail. They need to arrange for foliage to cut back to enable the street-lights to be effective and we have asked if lights could be intalled on the bridge itself. A meeting scheduled for late 2020 had been postponed due to Covid-19 but the Chairman has established another line of communication going forward. Cllr Sell asked whether the new twin-light column the Parish Council had installed a few years ago was effective – Cllr O’Brien replied not until the overgrowth is cut back.

C Lights on Cambridge Road – concerns have been raised about the lack of street-lighting on the Cambridge Road between Five Acres and the junction with High Lane. There is a steep drop from the footway to the east towards King Charles Drive should a pedestrian lose sight of the pathway. The Clerk reminded members that when Walpole Meadows was developed, the Council had requested an extension of the 30mph zone to include the new roundabout and in order that street-lighting would be installed for that length of the road. Cllr Sell stated that this was supported at planning committee but with no success.

Cllr Jessup agreed that you walk this stretch of footway at your peril and the Chairman reported a known incident. Cllr Sell wondered if the catholic church would be amenable to a light being installed near to their gate which would help? After further brief discussion, it was agreed to submit a formal request to Essex Highways to install street-lighting between Five Acres and the Walpole Meadows roundabout and to ask the catholic church to support the request. Cllr Hogg queried whether the pedestrian island just beyond the roundabout met standards.

D Request from a resident for additional lighting columns in Church Road – Cllr Sell commented that the footway is narrow in parts of Church Road. Following brief discussion, the committee agreed that a review of the current lighting should be undertaken with a report back to the next meeting.

**231 FINANCE**

The list of payments and invoices had been tabled and were approved.

**232 TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATION FROM PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE FOR INCREASE IN HOURS FOR ONE MEMBER OF STAFF**

In the absence of the sub-committee Chairman, Cllr Caton reported that a review of staffing hours had taken place and the sub-committee believed that there was a need for an increase in part-time hours for one member of staff with immediate effect with a view to taking this position full-time from April 2022. In response to Cllr Hogg, the Clerk stated that the additional costs between now and the end of March 2022 were around £2,000.

Cllr Sell said that he would prefer not to take a decision on this until further details of the work to be undertaken were known. It was agreed to ask Cllr Richards to prepare a report for consideration at the next Full Council meeting.

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**233 BONFIRE NIGHT**

The Chairman confirmed that Forest Hall School had notified the Council that the fireworks event could not be held on the school field as planned due to “Covid-19 and Health and Safety Issues”. With no other land secured for this year, the event would not be going ahead. In addition, St John’s Ambulance were not able to attend to provide first aid cover although the Clerk commented that if this had been the only issue, it could have been overcome as the Council has used private first-aid cover before.

The search is now on for an alternative site and enquiries have been made of two landowners with responses awaited. Cllr Smith asked whether it would be possible to join with another community and perhaps provide a bus service to take parishioners there. It was agreed that this could be a Plan B for another year if a site is not secured within the parish.

The Elms Farm public open space will be re-visited with the pyrotechnics team to see if it will be suitable and hopefully the land will be transferred to the Parish Council prior to next year’s event. Cllr O’Brien suggested using the land between the Brook and the railway line as a staging point for the display – this will be discussed with the landowner.

Cllr Prior asked about other sites which have been suggested by residents such as the Recreation Ground on Chapel Hill and the Mountfitchet Green. The Clerk responded that both are too small to achieve the required safety zones with the additional hazard of being surrounded by houses. Cllr Prior then asked about land to the north of the village. The Chairman responded that the kickabout area at Walpole Meadows held the same restrictions as the Rec and the land to the north of the entrance road is presently cultivated. It was important to remember that any site should have good pedestrian access otherwise we end up with a car parking issue also.

In response to Cllr Sell, the Chairman confirmed that it was the intention of the committee to hold a firework event in the parish in 2022 if a suitable site could be found. The funds raised in 2020/21 and the current year would be ringfenced for 2022. The Clerk added that if a new site also meant the bonfire could be held this would be even better.

Cllr Caton suggested that this information be posted on social media to inform residents and it was agreed to include examples of sites that have been considered but are not suitable so that people are aware of the requirements.

**234 DAY CENTRE – progress report**

Cllr O’Brien reported that due diligence enquiries with potential partners were nearing completion and the working group would be meeting again in the near future. The results of a grant funding application to UDC were still awaited – Cllr Sell offered to chase this up.

Cllr Prior left the meeting at 8.43pm

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**235 WINDMILL PROGRESS REPORT**

The Chairman reported that The Millers had met the previous week and, as previously reported, the Bank Holiday fete had been a tremendous success with record numbers of visitors. The next challenge is to sort out the fire alarm which has been going off at all hours of the day and particularly the night resulting in late call-outs for Millers who receive the alarms. A detailed quote for a replacement system was received today and is now under consideration.

In terms of maintenance, the next major project is replacement of the stocks. The timber was purchased some 12-18m ago and the costs involved in the replacement are around £8,500. Hopefully grant funding may be available through Historic England and other sources. Cllr Sell confirmed that all district councillors have been contacted with a view to making a contribution – he has agreed this and asked that the others are reminded.

The Chairman completed his report by stating that The Millers are considering operating a Christmas Grotto this year.

**236 YOUTH MATTERS**

Cllr Caton reported that numbers attending the Youth Club are slowly increasing and discussions with Essex County Council indicate that this is a similar picture across the county. Activities have been discussed with the operator, Gemini Youth Support, who had indicated their desire to be involved in work with refugees but following further discussions with Essex and Uttlesford this had not been able to progress for a variety of reasons.

We have two new confirmed members of the Youth Council and have received an approach from a 19-year old who is keen to join. As the current Constitution states 11-18 year-olds, we are checking with Essex to see if there is any reason not to permit this.

Cllr Hudson asked if there was any further information on the issues around county lines as mentioned at earlier meetings by Cty Cllr Gooding. The Clerk undertook to get an update.

Meeting Closed at 8.55pm

**ACTION POINTS**

229 Flood issues raise with press and MP – Cllr O’Brien and Clerk

230B Black Bridge lighting – Network Rail – Cllr O’Brien

230C Cambridge Road lighting letter to Essex Highways – Clerk

230D Review of Church Road lighting – Cllr O’Brien

232 Personnel Report – Cllr Richards

233 Search for site – all members and office

Social media post – Comms Officer