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**STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET PARISH COUNCIL F&GP COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a meeting of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on Wednesday 18th May 2022 in The Mountfitchet Exchange, Crafton Green, 72 Chapel Hill, Stansted, Essex

**PRESENT** Cllr J O’Brien (Chair), Cllrs M Caton, M Jessup, P Jones, F Richards, G Sell and

 T Smith

**ATTENDING** Mrs Ruth Clifford – Parish Clerk

 Mrs Emma Philbrick – Trainee Deputy Clerk – via Zoom

 Cllrs A Barnes and L Prior – via Zoom

 1 member of the press – via Zoom

**33 APOLOGIES FOR ABESENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Hogg as he is attending the funeral of a family member.

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

**34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST -** None

**35 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 30TH MARCH AND 11TH MAY 2022**

 **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the meetings held on 30th March and 11th May 2022 as true and accurate accounts

**36 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON ACTION POINTS FROM THE LAST MEETING -** None

**37 TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE CHAIR, CLLR O’BRIEN**

Cllr O’Brien reported the following:

 Agenda item 16 is being withdrawn to give the Clerk time to brief the new Chair of Personnel. This will be added to a future agenda.

 The Internal Auditor’s report has been received back with no concerns raised.

The Chair had been in discussions with the Clerk, and it has been decided that to improve financial controls further, they will get a member of the Council to check the payment schedule and invoices at each Finance and Full Council meeting and to sign to confirm checked.

 He thanked the Clerk for her hard work in keeping an effective control of the Council’s finances.

**38 LIGHTING**

**a) TO RECEIVE AN OUTAGE REPORT**

Park Road – An issue with none of the lights working – this has been identified as an underground cable issue which keeps blowing the fuses and has been reported to UK Power Networks.

 RG7 - Children’s play area on Recreation Ground

 Light outside Linden House on Chapel Hill

 RR6 – Rainsford Road

 Our contractor was in Stansted today so was hopefully looking into the above faults.

 WR5 – Our contractor is waiting to install the extension arm to hopefully provide some light to the Black Bridge, but we were awaiting permission from the house owner as the light is situated in their garden. They had so far not responded to correspondence.

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 There is an issue with the lights in the Memorial Gardens – Our contractor cannot get his equipment into the gardens to fix. We had contacted someone else who had a look and has issued a report. This will be on the agenda for a future meeting as the Committee may need to consider spending some money on them.

**b) GENERNAL REPORT ON LIGHTING**

There is a possibility of the Parish Council seeking a grant to change all of the remaining old lights in the village to LED. This is in the process of being investigated.

**39 FINANCE**

**a) TO APPROVE THE LIST OF PAYMENTS**

Cllr Jones had checked the schedule and invoices and counter signed.

 All other members were happy and the payment schedule was approved

**b) TO RECEIVE THE DRAFT YEAR END ACCOUNTS**

The Clerk advised that at the time the agenda was issued they were a draft but the Internal Audit had since taken place and the report had come back with no concerns. The full year-end accounts and IA report will now be taken to the next Full Council for approval and consideration of the papers for external audit.

**40 PARISH GRANTS – TO CONSIDER MORE APPLICATIONS**

Three further applications had been received and circulated to all members ahead of the meeting.

 Human Roots

 After discussions and having been proposed by Cllr Smith and seconded by Cllr Jones, it was unanimously:

 **RESOLVED** to award a grant of £500 to Human Roots

 Living Song

After discussions and having been proposed by Cllr Jessup and seconded by Cllr Caton, it was unanimously:

**RESOLVED** to delegate authority to the Clerk, in consultation with Cllr O’Brien, to award a grant of up to £730 to Living Song subject to confirmation that they had secured a venue. They would also be asked to give an update on their application to the Essex Arts and Culture Fund.

 Uttlesford Citizens Advice Bureau

After discussion, and having been proposed by Cllr Richards and seconded by Cllr Jessup, it was unanimously:

 **RESOLVED** to award a grant of £1,120 to Uttlesford Citizens Advice

**41 CHRISTMAS LIGHTING – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE WORKING GROUP**

Cllr O’Brien advised that he had met with Louise Bullman from Aylesford Electrical who are the current suppliers of the Christmas Lights and they had carried out a site visit. Louise had kindly come back with a proposal before the Christmas Lights Working Group meeting which

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took place on Monday 16th May. They are proposing that the Council replace all of the old lights with new ones and also extend by putting 5 additional lights at the Dog and Duck end plus one outside the King’s Arms and one at the entrance into the Lower Street Car Park. The Working Group had decided that they needed to be cautious about the amount being spent and he had advised Aylesford Electrical that the preferred option would be to have a mix of the old lighting and new. They were also looking at the possibility of asking the business owners to provide icicle lighting and to get more of the businesses involved to help produce a better display. They will be contacting local landlords and reporting back at the next meeting scheduled for 30th May 2022.

 There is no power supply to the Fountain so lights cannot be placed here although they have the possibility of someone who could arrange a better display of battery-operated lights.

 Cllr O’Brien has also asked for a quote for Christmas Tree and planters

**42 BONFIRE NIGHT – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE WORKING GROUP**

Cllr Caton advised that there has been little progress on this. She had asked Iris Evans to speak to Forest Hall School to see if they would allow the event to take place there but had not heard anything back. The Working Group is currently prioritising the Jubilee Weekend events.

**43 TO CONSIDER A QUOTE FOR THE 1 YEAR WORKS AS IDENTIFIED IN OUR 2021 TREE SURVEY**

The Clerk advised that they were keen to arrange for the 1 year works which were now due. The quote was from Mercers as they were the ones that carried out the survey and had done all the other identified works so far. Having been proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Jessup, it was unanimously;

 **RESOLVED** to accept the quotes from Mercer’s for the 1 year works identified in the 2021 tree survey.

**44 TO CONSIDER A RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL TO ENTER INTO A LEASE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF MOUNTFITCHET GREEN**

The Clerk advised that as part of the regeneration works on the Mountfitchet Green, the Open Spaces Committee want to enhance and make major improvements. Currently, anything that they want to do has to be applied for through UDC for permission and licences. The Clerk also explained that not owning the land was also an issue when applying for grants and went against us when submitting applications. With the support of some of the District Councillors, a proposal from UDC for the parish council to lease the land from them at a cost of £100 a year rent plus the cost of the grass cutting which would be £50 per cut or £800 per annum. The total additional cost per annum, on current prices, is around £1,000 and this can be covered from the General Reserve. The length of the lease was discussed. The Clerk reported that other leases with the UDC had a duration of 21 years. Members believed that the Council should ask for a 99-year lease minimum to allow more scope.

 Cllr Prior asked for clarification that they were committing to spend a minimum of £21,000 to prevent the need to gain permission and save time. It was clarified that it also gave the Council more chance to be awarded grants and improve the area for the community. The Clerk also advised that with any previous lease agreements, there was a cancellation clause if it felt it couldn’t continue with the arrangement. Cllr Sell commented that capital investment into an area where residents have previously felt neglected was a positive. Cllr Caton agreed with this and also stated that the hedging was appalling and that they fully intended to sort this for residents too.

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Cllr Barnes advised that the regeneration of Mountfitchet Green was part of a larger programme of improvement works for the community. The grants that could be obtained would provide screening for football facilities that had been requested for residents. This would not be possible if UDC kept the land as the grass cutting wouldn’t facilitate the football as it is allowed to grow too long. An integral part of the plan is to get the lease agreed and then they could also look at getting the disabled paths.

Cllr Smith advised he strongly supported the plans as it would also improve mental health for residents who would benefit from getting out and using the facilities.

Having been proposed by Cllr Sell and seconded by Cllr Caton it was unanimously:

**RESOLVED** to enter into a lease for the management of Mountfitchet Green but to request the lease be for 99 years instead of 21.

**45 CRAFTON GREEN HOUSE – TO RECEIVE ANY UPDATES**

Nothing much to update apart from the criminal damage which occurred last weekend where windows were smashed. The Clerk was currently obtaining quotes for repair or replacement as per request from the insurance company. Cllr Caton commented that the police had been very helpful over the whole incident.

**46 WINDMILL – TO RECEIVE ANY UPDATES**

Cllr O’Brien advised that they were hopefully having the stocks delivered today although he doesn’t know if they had the manpower to install them. Younger volunteers were very much needed to carry out some of the muscle work involved.

**47 YOUTH MATTERS – TO RECEIVE ANY UPDATES**

Cllr Caton advised the following:

 Youth Council

 They still had the three members and they are currently working on setting up the next meeting. The Chair of the Rungis Twinning Committee will be meeting with them when she visits at the end of June/beginning of July. They have not been to the Houses of Parliament yet as they have been holding out for new members, but she will arrange to take the three of them.

 Youth Club

They have been encountering the same behaviour as was experienced by a number of people the previous weekend and the police have been made aware. They have provided assistance to the leader and our PCSO and Special Constable, along with other officers, are making regular visits to them.

**48 STAFF MATTERS – TO CONSIDER A REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CLERK/CHAIR OF FINANCE**

As advised in the report from the Chair, this item has been withdrawn and will be on a future agenda.

 Before closing the meeting, the Chair advised that he had been asked by Ray Woodcock to urge all councillors to reply to his email dated 12th May regarding the licence for a 2nd

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dispensing pharmacy. Please treat as a priority as it is up to councillors to support. Cllr Caton

 advised that it was a passion that was shared by the Parish Council who have a working group for this and continue to still do so. Cllr Caton has met with and had correspondence with many organisations and representatives over this matter and will continue to do so.

Meeting closed at 8.33pm

NO ACTION POINTS