

EMPLOYMENT, FINANCE & STRATEGY GROUP MEETING

Thursday 7th November 2024 Minutes

Present: Cllrs Riordan, Arger, Sharp, Hotson, Martin, Perry plus RFO and Clerk

1. Apologies for Absence: Cllr Wakeford

2. Dispensations: NA

3. Minutes of previous meeting – 17th October 2024

Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Perry seconded to approve the minutes of the 17th October 2024; agreed majority 5 for, Against 0 and Abstained 1

Request for information / Worknest – Union to formally request PR to provide copy of emails / reports regarding the review of staff grades – early 2024

Parish Office – HS documents ok, RG resend note emergency lights and outside light being done 29th November 2024. Heater, room 1 still needs replacing.

HSE Poster - H&S rep – R Griffiths, Contact P Riordan

HR training feedback – excellent circulate presentation / forms – (arrived during the meeting and circulated) need to review current processes.

Due to numbers attendee the cost reduced to £350 plus VAT.

Office Decoration

Crack in ceiling in room 1 – SCCT aware

Council decorate room 1, 2 plus internal corridor downstairs and room 8 upstairs

SCCT – communal areas – entrance, stairway, toilets, kitchen, meeting room, upstairs corridor and other rooms

1. Deep clean
2. Currently - magnolia walls, white ceiling plus above picture rails, window ledges, door frames and skirting boards. New carpet tiles?

Office liaison with SCCT, obtain quotes and report back.

4. Action plan

Cllr Sharp – finalise ACV for Kings Head

Review Schedule of Policies – add Safeguarding

HR Group Tof R – some minor amendments (Cllr Arger) and group felt they needed to engage with the recent HR Training.

CIL funding policy – will follow regulations and MBC guidance

5. Budget setting 2025/26

a) **EFSG proposals** – Added in £500 for Worknest? (include in professional fees)

b) Working group proposals

Note Greener Group figures from 2024/25, awaiting final figures for 2025/26
Scenic / Comms group incorporated in to working draft budget

c) **Fees** – discussed 2025/26 based on last year's fees

Youth club – per session

Community groups with membership – increase from £10 - £12 (£4 per hour)
Commercial hires increase from £30 - £40 day and up to £80 in evening

Allotments

Remain the same, £120 per year.

Jubilee Field SMFC CIC Senior

Last year agreed £6,500 and in 2025/26 £7,500 plus inflation.

Main pitch	£7,500
Recently agreed £50 pm for extra refreshments, £600 py	£ 600
Subtotal	£8,100

Plus CPI September 2024 – RFO to bring to next meeting

SMFC CIC Youth

Plus CPI September 2024 – RFO to bring to next meeting

General hire – remain the same

Double check with benchmarking

d) Donations

Group discussed and proposed increase for 2025/26 to

All Saints PCC Parish Magazine	£250
Community Centre for Debt Advice	£250
Heart of Kent Hospice	£250
Kent, Surry and Sussex Air Ambulance	£250
Kenward Trust	£150
Royal British Legion	£150
Staplehurst WI – Village Clean up refreshments	£ 50
Men's Shed – Village Clean up refreshments	£ 50

Total Donations **£1,400**

Victim Support Clerk to enquiry how many clients in Staplehurst and report back

6. Working draft budget 2025/26

RFO led discussion, some key points:

- General percentage increase on contracts or actual increase if known
- Included all "working group suggestions"
- Allotments – water, still chasing an initial bill

- Churchyard – include £16,757 – need to maintain an important service to the community.

Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Riordan seconded to recommend to Council the donation of £16,757 to the church for the maintenance of the Churchyard -agreed unanimously (report to next Council)

- Jubilee Field – budgeting for Council to manage as is. If 3G pitch – which ever management arrangement - will be different.
- Seeking further costs for Roof and ventilation, agreed to increase sinking fund to £5,000
- Youth Club – seeking grants for toilet works – this financial year and roof may need patching (earmarked reserves)
- Surrenden Field – funding for new pavilion in earmarked reserves
- Some work required on the roof – use earmarked reserves
- Wimpey Field – includes MVCP management costs
- Office redecoration – seeking costs
- Computer support (included in Coms Group proposal and equipment)
- Professional fees – need say £5,000, retain £10,000?

7. Contracts

Following a discussion, include two hedge cuts per annum between September and March at Youth Club and both sides of Jubilee Field hedge. Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Hotson seconded to recommend to Council the list below.

Staplehurst Parish Council - Forthcoming Contract Reviews/Renewals 2025-26

Contract Item	Company	Annual Value 2024-25	Annual Value 2025-26	Cost per Unit 2025-26	Current Contract End Date	Notes
Grass mowing Youth Club x8 cuts	Forestry First Ltd	£400.00	£480.00	£60.00	31/03/2025	First increase in 4 years. EF&SG for FC Approval .
Hedge Cutting Youth Club	Forestry First Ltd	£300.00	£600.00	£300.00	31/03/2025	No price increase from last year. EF&SG for FC Approval
Hedge cutting Surrenden Field	Forestry First Ltd	£1,460.00	£1,500.00	£1,500.00	31/03/2025	Last price increase in 2017. EF&SG

						for FC Approval
Mowing A229/Chestnut Avenue X8 cuts	Forestry First Ltd	£600.00	£640.00	£80	31/03/2025	First increase in 5 years. EF&SG for FC Approval.
Grass mowing & strimming Wimpey Field	Contrast Garden Maintenance	£1,200.00	£1,200.00	£25 per hr	31/03/2025	EF&SG for FC Approval
Village Centre Rubbish Bin	Countrystyle Group	£832.52	£832.52	£16.01 per week		Auto renewal unless 60 days' notice given.
Water supply Youth Club	Castle Water	£139.59	Est £240.00	£20.00 p.m.	Ongoing	Annual Auto renewal
Hedge Cutting Jubilee Field – 2024/25 and 2025/26	Forestry First Ltd	£780.00	£780.00	£780.00	New Contract	EF&SG for FC Approval

8. Jubilee Field Hedge cutting – see above

9. National Staff pay rise – RFO updated group £1,290 per year pro rata, backdated to 1st April 2024 and paid in November 2024.

10. Next Meeting 21st November 2024 – 1:30pm-

- Working Budget
- Draft CIL policy