

EMPLOYMENT, FINANCE & STRATEGY GROUP MEETING
Thursday 15th August 2024 Minutes

1. **Present:** Cllrs Riordan, Hotson, Sharp, Arger, Perry and Clerk plus RFO.
2. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Martin
3. **Dispensations:** NA
4. **Minutes of previous meeting – 3rd July 2024 – see separate email and 25th July 2024 attached**
 - Parish Office risk assessment - Clerk to circulate ECIR and copy of Fire Certificate Minutes of the 3rd and 25th July 2024 noted
5. **Action plan – attached**
 - a. JFWG - review risk assessments
 - b. Scenic – need to review Youth Club / Surrenden Field
 - c. Caretaker risk assessment coming to next meeting of EFS group
 - d. Youth Club – note presentation by KCC on Pilot Project – not practical for SPC to operate on own with volunteers.
 - e. Vol Awards – Open up for Nomination Forms – next Council – then Scenic assess applications
 - f. Parish meeting / Volunteer Awards May 2025 – need to draft
6. **Completion of AGAR notice** – RFO led discussion to explain that one point raised was about “early” publication – RFO felt aggrieved as followed previous External Auditors advice, new External Auditor relented and agreed to make it clearer in the future!
The group thanked the RFO for all her hard work – RFO to do a report to Council
7. **HR Group / training – discuss**
Agreed Clerk and Cllr Arger / Martin to review Terms of Reference and report back. All Councillors agreed training vital – and agreed to attend – preferred 29th / 30th October 2024 evening training.

Clerk to liaise with KALC, neighbouring Councils and report back.
8. **ROSPA reports initial feedback - RFO to lead discussion**
We have had a quote for maintenance of Outdoor Gym £ 575.70 plus VAT – already delegated to RFO in consultation with Chairman. Agreed RFO to action and note in Clerks Report to next Council meeting.

RFO and caretaker continue to work through other actions.
9. **Contracts – RFO to lead discussion**
 - N-Power street light electricity for renewal - agreed
 - Royal Mail – Annual Licence fee for Business Reply Envelopes – not required at the moment.
10. **Council strategic action plan – attached for discussion**
Clerk and Cllr Arger led the debate and it was felt a worthwhile project as we have undertaken a residents survey and need to use the research to inform the Council’s work. Group discussed “initial working draft” and need to add in “sound financial management”

Agreed Cllr Riordan would contact Councillors to have a “Councillor workshop” in September 2024 to work through the initial working draft and report back to this group and then onto Council.

11. Updated Schedule of Policies – attached

Schedule noted – double check and bring back as per schedule.

Noted Reserve’s Policy – includes CIL funding of £53,542.23

Clerk raised MBC S106 website – can use to identify funding for Staplehurst i.e. KCC funding in Staplehurst - bring to next meeting.

12. Jubilee Field - discuss

Clerk emphasised that the work is taking a disproportionate amount of office time – he had to leave the meeting to unlock gates for grass cutting.

The Council mower is currently being repaired, they ordered a part, Est £250, to get the mower working and then work out if anything else needs repairing. Likely to be out until October 2024.

Group discussed the issues and noted the Council agreed the expenditure budget, the fees and charges and noted the 1st quarter budget monitoring report.

Agreed need to focus on the Jubilee Field as a budget head.

Aware that some items are going to be over budget such as:

- Mowing estimated twice the budget as long as the mower is out of action.
- Maintenance of the mower likely to exceed budget.

Clerk to send summary to all councillors regarding the mower situation

Also some un-budgeted items as well – cleaning equipment, extractor fans and deep clean.

JFWG investigating extractor fans for changing rooms and the maintenance of existing boilers (controls / timers) to pare down on expenditure budget

Group discussed draft Heads of Terms for SMFC clubhouse lease – one more meeting then onto JFWG and onto Council – same as the Girl Guide lease.

13. Next Meeting 19th September 2024 – 1;30pm

Note request from Renewable Connections to meet on the Planning Application 24/502235/FULL deferred to meet via MBC. Take to next Planning Committee under Clerks Report.