

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – 10th December 2019 at 6.00pm

Committee: Cllr Sweatman (Chairman)*
Cllr Peacock (Vice Chair)
Cllr Favor (Town Mayor)
Cllr Dabell (Deputy Town Mayor)
Cllrs: J Belsey*, Mrs M Belsey, Mrs Mainstone, Matthews, Mrs Mockford, Osborne, Visser* and Whittaker

*= absent

Also in attendance: Cllr Amos, Cllr Mrs Farren, Cllr Ody and one member of the public

Officers present: Town Clerk, Mr Chambers and Mr Quenault

203 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no questions.

204 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

| | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Cllr Visser | Personal Commitment |
| Cllr Sweatman | Personal Commitment |
| Cllr J Belsey | Personal Commitment |

The Committee would like to minute best wishes to Mrs Sweatman regarding her ongoing treatment and wished her a return to full health soon.

205 **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19th SEPTEMBER 2019**

RESOLVED: to accept the minutes of 19TH September 2019 as a true record and for the Chairman to sign them as such.

206 **TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Whole Committee have an interest in Agenda Item 13, however a dispensation is held to allow the Committee to consider the matter.

Regarding Agenda item 14, it was accepted that the trustees of Chequer Mead may remain as there was no decision to be made, however if there was to be any elongated discussion they may be asked to leave.

Cllr Whittaker declared a personal interest in The East Grinstead Rugby Club for item 12

Cllr Osbourne declared an interest in item 9 as a hirer and item 14 as the Chairman of the Chequer Mead Trust.

Cllr Mrs Belsey declared an interest in Age UK East Grinstead and The East Grinstead Museum for item 9.

207 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman advised the Council that Chequer Mead had written to the Council as landowner that they were intending to refit the toilets next year. The Chairman wished them well with the project.

208 TO RECEIVE THE ACCOUNTS FOR SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2019

Mr Chambers introduced the report and took questions

It was clarified that the various tree works that happened in the three months were all in budget and were charged to Public Works.

It was clarified that the contaminated water testing was carried out in the cemetery as a legal requirement. The test results established that there was no contaminated water.

It was clarified that local businesses may be favoured from quotes from other businesses if the Council believe they offer good quality and value for money for their service or product.

Mr Chambers advised he would email the explanation as to the cost of Green T Shirts (which was believed to be more than 3 T shirts) and the Councillors indemnity insurance.

RESOLVED: To accept the accounts for September, October and November 2019

209 TOWN COUNCIL FINANCES - POSITION STATEMENT

Mr Chambers introduced the report explaining the balances.

He explained that the accounts are two thirds through the year. The total bank account balances was £1.25 million, in comparison, last year's balance was £1.15 million. Total income received was 75% of the full year target. The expenditure sat slightly below the anticipated figure of 66% at 64%. The balance in the reserve account is high at this time as the second half of the agreed precept was recently received.

While election costs were cheaper than first expected due to the reduction in polling stations the election budget line is currently showing as overspent. However this is due to the fact that the surplus funds in the earmarked reserve have not yet been transferred. This transfer will occur at year end. Some staffing costs had increased because of the settlement payment made to the former Clerk's PA and the introduction of having a temporary Clerk PA.

East Court income was higher than the year to date budget due to the increase in weddings and events booked.

Neighbourhood plan was sitting at a very high favourable variance but this money is accrued every year for the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan policies.

Civic Pride had improved income due to more sponsorship opportunities around the town. It was noted that the street lighting bill for 2019/2020 has not yet been received.

Questions followed: Why was the miscellaneous expenditure in Cemeteries overspent? This was due to the Council refunding the costs of a funeral, details of which were informed to the Council at the last Amenities and Tourism meeting.

Had we received the tourist grant from MSDC? Yes we had received this grant for the contribution for the Tourism Officer Post from MSDC.

Are we expecting to make a surplus at the end of the year? We are anticipating a small surplus at the end of the year but it is difficult to confirm at this stage.

The committee thanked the East Court staff for the increased income in that area.

The report was noted.

210 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Mr Chambers introduced the report, explaining the two KPIs and current performance. The Sickness statistics in September were largely due to two employees who are no longer employed by the Council.

The report was noted.

211 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES

The recommendations to be considered were the allowance of community groups to use rooms at East Court without Charge and for the Cemetery and Burial Fees 2020.

It was commented that some of these groups are receiving grants as well as getting free use. It was mentioned that this Town Council has always supported local groups. It was also stated that many of these local groups provide vital care to the community and improve many people's lives. Councillors were advised to spend time with the groups to develop their understanding.

RESOLVED: to approve minutes 196 and 198 05.12.19

212 DELEGATED DECISIONS

The committee noted that the moving of this meeting to accommodate the poll stations for the General Elections had been delegated.

213 EXTERNAL & INTERNAL AUDIT

The Committee noted the reports and thanked Mr Chambers, Mr Quenault and the Town Clerk for a very positive external and internal audit report.

214 YOUTH SPORTS REVENUE GRANTS

The Committee received four late applications from EG Rugby Club, Eg Meads FC, EG Hockey Club and EG Town FC. This made 6 applications and would allocate all funds. It was commented that the Town Council have a very good relationship with the sports clubs around the town. The grants are fully appreciated and help with youth development and for the health and wellbeing of the town.

It was suggested that the Town Council should let the schools supply funding for children's health. And that the Council should use the money for other organisations in the town rather than Sports Clubs.

RESOLVED:

- 1) The Council approved the Youth Sports Revenue Grant's as shown below:

| Organisation | Amount |
|---|--------|
| East Grinstead Girls Football Development | £500 |
| East Grinstead Cricket Club | £500 |
| East Grinstead Rugby Football Club | £500 |
| East Grinstead Meads Football Club | £500 |
| East Grinstead Hockey Club | £500 |
| East Grinstead Town Football Club | £500 |
| Total | £3,000 |

215 COUNCILLORS ALLOWANCE FOR 2020/21

The Chairman introduced the report and the Committee were asked to confirm the Councillors allowance, consider the allowance for the Mayor and also asked to consider the mileage allowance for Council members attending authorised training and meetings outside the area. There was a suggestion that the allowance should be reduced or removed to keep Council Tax rises down.

RESOLVED:

- 1) The Committee agreed to a 2% rise for the annual Councillors Allowance in line with the 2018 decision to align the rise with the Cost of Living for staff taking the allowance to £1178.1 per Councillor
- 2) The Committee agreed to a 2% rise for the annual Mayor's Allowance for 2020 taking the allowance to £1978.8
- 3) The Committee agreed that the Mileage Allowance for Councillors remain at the levels set for 2019/2020.

216 CHEQUER MEAD REPORT TO COUNCIL

A report was presented to the Committee by Cllr Osborne who is the Chairman of The Trustees at Chequer Mead. He thanked the former chair Cllr Whittaker and mentioned that the theatre was going through an exciting period. He was pleased that the catering was now being taken place in-house. It is being run as a separate trading organisation under the umbrella of the Chequer Mead organisation. This was under the advice of the Chequer Mead auditors. It is a subsidiary trading company which is the separate part of the main CIO.

It was asked whether the surplus at the end of the year included the £74,000 grant from the Town Council and it was confirmed that it did.

The report was noted with thanks.

217 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR 2020/21

The Committee considered the proposed dates for the meetings for 2020/21.

RESOLVED:

1. The Committee agreed to the dates as shown in the report and
2. Recommended to Council on 6th January 2020, the following dates for Council meetings:

11th May 2020
18th June 2020
6th July 2020
5th October 2020
4th January 2021
25th January 2021

218 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKING PARTY

The Committee were asked to approve the introduction of a Neighbourhood Plan Working Party.

It was commented as to how important it was to update the Neighbourhood Plan so that it is aligned with the District Council Plan and other changes in planning policy.

RESOLVED:

- 1) The constitution of a new working group; the Group to consist of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of this committee, Chairman and Vice Chairman of Planning plus Cllr Whittaker, with Officer Support from the Town Clerk.
- 2) The remit to be to review the Neighbourhood Plan policies, and recommend amendments.
- 3) To present the amended plan back to this Committee for agreement to proceed through appropriate steps to adopt the amended plan.

- 219 The chairman advised that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on 16th January and closed the meeting at 7.05pm

SIGNED

CHAIRMAN