

Worth Parish Council
Minutes of the General Purposes & Finance Committee Meeting held on
January 9th 2023 commencing at 7.30pm

Present:	Cllr Scott (Chairman)	Cllr Phillips
	Cllr Casella	Cllr Coote
	Cllr Cruickshank	Cllr Dorey
	Cllr Gibson	Cllr Hitchcock
	Cllr Mayer	Cllr Stewart
	Cllr Webb	
	Mrs J Nagy (Clerk)	3 members of the public

88 Public Question Time

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting: Cllr King was present as a member of the public.

89 Apologies

Apologies were noted and accepted from Cllr Pointer

90 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations at this point of the meeting.

91 Minutes

It was AGREED by all present that the Minutes of the General Purposes & Finance Committee meeting held on 28th November 2022 were a true and correct record.

92 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman had no announcements

93 Correspondence List

The Correspondence List was NOTED.

94 Accounts and Financial Matters

Grant Application from Crawley Down Christmas Lights for £750

The Chairman proposed the suspension of Standing Orders to allow a member of the public to speak; this was seconded by and agreed by all present.

Two representatives of the group were present at the meeting. They advised that they had not received the usual c£1000 income from raffle ticket sales last year after the Fayre was cancelled. Fixed costs each year are around £1900, plus any additions. There was currently around £2000 in their bank account.

The Clerk reminded them of the imminent felling of the ash tree due to die back. They were aware of this, and said it would be an issue as the Santa display that went over the road was usually attached to this tree. They were currently looking at alternatives.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

Discussion took place as whether an increased amount could be considered, due to the popularity of the display.

It was proposed by Cllr Cruickshank, seconded by Cllr Coote and AGREED by all present with

the exception of Cllr Casella who abstained, that a grant of £1,000 would be awarded to the Crawley Down Christmas Lights.

95 Draft Budget

The Chairman referred to his analysis of potential year end reserve balances as requested at the last meeting. He acknowledged that end of year balances had been high in the last two to three years, but that is due to planned expenditure not being spent as result of Covid and CGR issues.

He was still of the opinion that a precept of £350,000 is justified by planned expenditure. The CCTV and Bowers Place projects were due to commence in this financial year, which would leave depleted reserves. He advised that a lesser precept could make the Council vulnerable without sufficient reserves.

A precept of £350,000 equated to an overall increase of under 9%, with Band D increasing from £64.25 to £69.94.

Cllr Gibson would prefer a lesser increase of around 5%; councillors disagreed with this opinion.

It was AGREED by all present, with the exception of Cllr Gibson who was against the proposal, that the Committee would recommend a precept of £350,000 to Full Council on 23rd January, supported by the draft budget.

96 Bowers Place Parking

At this point the Chairman announced that in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 s1 the press and public would be excluded during the next item due to the confidential nature of the matter to be discussed, as it related to sensitive commercial issues. Members of the Public left the meeting.

The meeting returned to Public Session.

During Confidential Session, the tenders were considered, and a recommendation was agreed to put to Full Council on 23rd January 2023.

97 Council Premises and Land

At this point the Chairman announced that in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 s1 the press and public would be excluded during the next item due to the confidential nature of the matter to be discussed, as it related to sensitive commercial issues. There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

The meeting returned to public session.

During Confidential Session, a course of action was agreed in relation to Lashmere play area.

Licences for area in front of Crawley Down Shops

Surrey Hills Solicitors have several queries in relation to the what the Council intends to do with these areas, as that will affect the licences, and the length of their terms

The Clerk has passed these queries to the CDEIWP for consideration. Cllr Scott, as Leader of the Crawley Down Environmental and Infrastructure Working Party, confirmed that it would be discussed at the next meeting.

Councillors NOTED this information

98 Water Outage

The Chairman thanked all the staff for all their efforts in ensuring that a water supply was available from the Haven Centre; this was endorsed by all present.

The Clerk thanked Cllr Gibson who also collected water from East Grinstead, taking it back to the Haven Centre for ongoing distribution, which was noted by all present

The Chairman referred to the Clerk's report. The Clerk advised that she had had the resources to assist the community help itself, but was unable to react quickly due to lack of information.

The Communications Officer has advertised again in the newsletter and via social media the need for vulnerable people to register as such with the Council, using the water outage as an example. Due to data protection, there is no access to any list of such people, we are reliant on them coming forward themselves.

The following action was AGREED:

- a) Write to MSDC about the lack of support from its emergency team. Updates were slow and information found via social media before being circulated. It would have been helpful some kind of instruction could have been given to the East Grinstead water station to allow us to have more water, given that we were setting up our own local distribution point.
- b) Write to South East Water about their own lack of emergency plan. A large area was affected, but information was sporadic. The number of water stations, and the amount of water that they had available was not acceptable. The EG station closed on Wednesday when many residents' supply was still off; they were directed towards Crowborough and Haywards Heath.
- c) It will be suggested that contact details for parishes should be made available to utility companies, together with an emergency number given only to parishes. It is very difficult dealing with emergency situations ourselves when we have no information, even when we have the resources to do so. Being able to collect a significant amount of water to take back to the village would have eased the situation, for example.
- d) Write to Jeremy Quin MP, pointing out the above, and perhaps adding that ongoing poor maintenance of the local water network infrastructure is not conducive to permitting more housing in the area, copying in Mims Davies MP, MSDC and South East Water

Cllr Coote suggested that a working party be formed to discuss lack of infrastructure such as utility and healthcare provision, as a result of ongoing development. The Chairman asked him to gauge interest and to come back to the Committee accordingly.

99 Matters for Consideration submitted by the Infrastructure and Environment Working Parties

Cllr Dorey reported that the first Christmas lights competition went well; he thanked Cllrs Casella and Stewart for their assistance with this.

Both Working Parties have meetings on 11th January.

Councillors NOTED this information

100 Consideration of items for discussion by the Environment & Infrastructure Working Parties

There were no items suggested for future discussion

101 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be on 6th February 2023

Meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Chairman: _____

Date: _____