

HEATHFIELD AND WALDRON PARISH COUNCIL

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 1 JULY 2014 AT 7.00 PM

AT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING ROOM

PRESENT: Mr Baker, Mr Bowdler, Ms Bowdler, Mrs Clark, Mr Coffey, Mr Hart, Mrs Holmwood, Mr Hough, Mr Ridley, Mr Woodhouse and Mr Woolley. District Councillor Cade was also present (non-voting).

The Clerk was in attendance.

Mr Leggo from the Sussex and Surrey Associations of Local Councils, County Councillor Simmons, representing the Heathfield Partnership and Mr Goldsmith representing the Chamber of Trade were also present.

OPEN FORUM

Mr Leggo stated that the GPC was not being used very much across the country because existing powers covered much of the activities of local councils. There were examples of small one-off instances such as Farnham TC purchasing a bike for a para-olympian.

There followed a discussion about proposals already put forward by the BD Committee and Mr Leggo confirmed that long-term loans were available from the PWLB at a favourable rate in excess of £500,000 where a suitable case had been made. The Council would have to produce a Business Plan and evidence of community engagement. A Business Plan produced by Burgess Hill Town Council was provided as an example and help would be available from SSALC free of charge.

An example of a simple questionnaire used by a local council elsewhere was put before the Committee and Mr Leggo suggested that it would be a means of canvassing the local community to see what they wanted.

Various ideas were discussed, including those that, whilst bringing benefits to the community, would at best be self-supporting in terms of revenue and most would require up-front capital funding.

There was discussion about various renewable energy schemes and Mr Leggo agreed to investigate the legality of local councils selling surplus energy and to provide information on community benefits in relation to existing schemes.

With regard to capping, Mr Leggo stated that the Local Government Minister's view was that any future capping of local councils was likely to apply only to those with a Band D precept in excess of £160.

The Meeting commenced at 8.44 p.m.

22/14

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence had been received from Mr Landreth and Mr Taylor.

23/14 **DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

All Members of the Committee disclosed an interest in respect of the Parish Council offices.

24/14 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 May 2014, having been previously circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

25/14 **MATTERS ARISING**

Information on the new website was in the process of being corrected and improved.

With regard to affordable housing, Mr Bowdler reported that he had investigated the idea with a developer and had come to the conclusion that it would be more cost-effective to find an existing property for conversion.

26/14 **MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE**

It had been suggested that District Councillor Cade be invited to join the Committee and it was **RESOLVED** the he be accepted onto the Committee as a non-voting member.

27/14 **PROPOSALS**

a) Village Shop

The Committee discussed a proposal from Mrs Holmwood that a community shop be set up at Punnetts Town. An example was operating in Chiddingly and whilst there was some support for the idea but it was acknowledged that it would be difficult to generate much income from such an initiative and a suitable site would have to be found.

b) Solar PV Panels

The Chairman had suggested that panels be put on the roofs of Council property where possible. It was agreed that the situation regarding planning permission should be clarified and sites including the Parish Council offices, Tower Recreation Ground Pavilion and Lucas Memorial Hall (through the Charitable Trust) be investigated.

In all cases the ability of the roof structures to withstand the additional weight of the panels would have to be confirmed.

c) Shared services

The Committee discussed the possibility of shared services with adjoining parishes and it was agreed that this be investigated further through SSALC and WDALC.

d) Community Survey

It was agreed that the possibility of carrying out a community survey be investigated further.

PARISH COUNCIL OFFICES

The Committee considered the reports of two estate agents which Mr Woodhouse had shown around the offices with a view to obtaining possible income projections for leasing out the first floor of the premises. It was noted that planning permission and building regulations approval would be required as existing use was restricted to parish council offices only. It was agreed that a full financial impact and feasibility study would be needed to progress the matter further.

The current business rate classification was queried as it appeared not to have been updated since the Parish Council office was opened. The Assistant Clerk was investigating this.

28/14 **CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998 SECTION 27 – TO CONSIDER EFFECTS (IF ANY) ARISING FROM ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were none at this time.

29/14 **MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED**

None received.

30/14 **RISK MANAGEMENT**

There were no risk management implications arising from matters discussed at the meeting.

31/14 **DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held in the Parish Council Offices at 7.30 p.m. on Monday 1 September 2014.

The Meeting closed at 9.50 p.m.

Signed:

Chairman

Dated: