

HEATHFIELD AND WALDRON PARISH COUNCIL

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

8 OCTOBER 2014 AT 7.30 PM

AT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING ROOM

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

The Clerk was in attendance.

County Councillor Simmons representing the Heathfield Partnership and Mr Goldsmith representing Heathfield Chamber of Commerce were present as advisors to the Committee.

1 member of the public was also present.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman of the Parish Council (Mr Coffey) was in the Chair and invited nominations for Chairman. Mrs Clark nominated Mr Ridley, seconded by Mr Hough. A vote was taken and Mr Ridley was duly elected as Chairman and took the Chair.

Nominations for Vice-Chairman were then invited. Mr Hough nominated Mr Hart, seconded by Mrs Holmwood. A vote was taken and Mr Hart was duly elected as Vice-Chairman.

32/14 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

All Members of the Committee were present.

33/14 **DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

Mr Hough disclosed a pecuniary interest in respect of incubator units as a Trustee of the Heathfield Partnership. Mr Coffey and Mrs Holmwood disclosed personal interest in the same matter as Parish Council representatives on Heathfield Partnership Committees.

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

34/14 **MINUTES**

The accuracy of the Minutes had been raised at full Council and Mr Hough had circulated an alternative version. For Members' information, the Clerk had circulated prior to the meeting an explanation of the purpose and content of Minutes. However, concern was expressed by some Members of the Committee that the Minutes were "selective" and that some matters discussed had not been recorded.

Following a Motion put forward by Mrs Clark a vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED** by the majority of those present that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2014, having been previously circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

35/14 **MATTERS ARISING**

With reference to the erection of solar panels on Parish Council owned properties, Mr Hough asked that it be recorded that an installation had taken place at Crowborough without need for planning permission.

Mr Hough asked that proposals for affordable housing be put back on the agenda for the next meeting.

36/14 **TERMS AND PROTOCOLS FOR BD COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered a report from the Chairman of the Council setting out proposals for the terms of reference for the Committee to be expanded to include community initiatives and money saving ideas. In this context, it was proposed that the name of the Committee be amended to reflect this and it was **RESOLVED** that the name be changed to the Community and Business Development Committee.

It was proposed, as part of good practice principles that potential money-making initiatives should be thoroughly assessed and an independent business plan, financial scrutiny report and viability assessment produced. The financial risk assessment elements would need to be reflected in the Committee's risk list.

There was discussion relating to the cost and timing of such work and the limited budget (£500) available to the Committee at present. It was noted that an increased budget for a particular project could be requested through FGP Committee or full Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that, where necessary, independent reports be obtained in relation to projects, incorporating business plan, financial scrutiny and viability assessments.

37/14 **PROGRESS REPORTS**

a) Solar panels on Parish Council properties

It was noted that the need for planning permission would be dependent upon the position and scale of the panels. The Chairman of the Council to advise further on the planning aspects once a firm proposal was available. The Committee discussed the length of time needed to yield a return on investment – possibly 6 years - and it was suggested that some companies carried out installations on the basis of a loan. The Clerk reported that SSALC had advised there was no definitive answer on whether the Parish Council would be able to retain any profits made.

It was **RESOLVED** that the ability for the Parish Council to retain any profits made be investigated further and that the Chairman would seek to obtain alternative quotations.

b) Shared services

The Clerk reported that there had been some interest shown in the possibility of shared services with other parishes and use of the office. AiRS had expressed an interest in using the upstairs meeting room for two of their officers who were working on projects relating to Heathfield. The Clerk would investigate further.

c) Community Survey

The Clerk had produced a draft Survey which would be emailed around to Committee Members for information and comment. There was discussion about the costs of delivering the surveys to households in the parish and it was considered that most could be hand delivered by volunteers. The Parish Council's Facebook page could be expanded to include the survey and the 6th Form College could be asked to complete the Questionnaire, too.

It was noted that there would be cost implications in some of the priorities listed in the survey. It would be made clear to residents that depending upon the priorities identified in the survey results, this could have the effect of increasing the Council's Precept. Mr Woolley and Mr Thomas to progress further.

d) Parish Council Offices

There was nothing further to report at this time.

e) Village Shop

The Committee noted that the model elsewhere was that it would be run by volunteers, not paid staff. The difficulty of finding an appropriate site in Punnetts Town was acknowledged. Mrs Holmwood would investigate further.

38/14 **MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a) Incubator units in Heathfield

Mr Simmons reported that it had been a long-held objective for the Partnership for incubator units which would enable businesses just starting up to benefit from shared costs and advice. There would be some rate relief from Wealden District Council and the initiative would be self-funding, not profit or loss making. It was hoped that the Heathfield Partnership and Parish Council could work together but the first priority was to identify a suitable site.

b) Age Concern

Documents relating to forward planning for the charity would be circulated to Members and Mr Hepworth had been invited to talk to Members at the next meeting.

c) Locality and our place funding

A sum of £10,000 had been awarded to Heathfield to help improve services in the town. The project was being overseen by AiRS and the first priority was to identify priorities in terms of lack of services. The Chairman of the Council and the Clerk had attended a meeting organised by 3VA at which representatives of various agencies had been present and a Village Agent had been appointed to progress the project.

39/14 **CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998 SECTION 27 – TO CONSIDER EFFECTS (IF ANY) ARISING FROM ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were none at this time.

40/14 **MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED**

Mr Simmons reported that £2,000 had been offered to Heathfield through the Streets Ahead project. It had been suggested that it be used to expand social media opportunities. The Committee noted that the Heathfield.net website was being re-launched this month and the wish of the Partnership to work with the Parish Council in promoting the Farmers Market.

41/14 **RISK MANAGEMENT**

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

42/14 **DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held in the Parish Council Offices at 7.30 p.m. on Tuesday 9 December 2014 at 7.30 pm.

The Meeting closed at 9.20 p.m.

Signed:

Chairman

Dated: