



EAST PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

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AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES: of the Committee Meeting held on Monday 15th March, 2021 at 14:00 via the Zoom online meeting application

PRESENT: Councillors Patricia Gander, John Gunston, Elizabeth Linton, Glyn Mathias (Chairman), Steve Toney and Steven Wilkinson

ALSO: Clerk to the Council Simon Cross

ABSENT: Councillor Rick McElroy

The meeting opened at 14:00.

The meeting was held in accordance with *The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020* and the council's own *Protocol for Remote Meetings*.

215/21 APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

A retrospective apology was received from Cllr McElroy.

216/21 PERSONAL AND/OR PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

None were declared.

217/21 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No members of the public were present.

218/21 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14TH DECEMBER 2020

The draft Minutes had been circulated to all councillors on 16th December asking for suggested amendments by 23rd December. No suggestions had been received.

The committee AGREED the Minutes could be signed as a true record of the meeting held on 16th December. The committee further AGREED Cllr Mathias could complete this task when he was next at the Council Office.

219/21 UPDATES ON MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The committee NOTED the following report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Matters Arising

Minute 954/18 – playing of cricket on the Warren Recreation Ground – the Full Council meeting held on 1st March approved the final version of the Playing of Cricket Working Party’s report which Cllr Bowman will be delivering to all households and non-domestic premises bordering the Warren Recreation Ground this week. The report includes output from a meeting held with council and cricket club representatives in January of this year.

Minute 919/20 – Emergency Planning Working Party – at its February meeting, Full Council adopted the following two documents: a Business Continuity Plan and an Emergency Resilience Plan.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

10th March 2021

Minute 954/18 – playing of cricket on the Warren Recreation Ground – the Clerk confirmed Cllr Bowman had delivered the Playing of Cricket Working Party’s report and a covering letter to the residential and non-domestic properties bordering the recreation ground. An initial response had been received from one household and this had been forwarded to Cllr Bowman for consideration with the working party.

220/21 **CODE OF CONDUCT**

The committee NOTED the following report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Annual Review of the council’s Code of Conduct

Committee is asked to carry out an Annual Review of the council’s Code of Conduct. Committee members will remember this action was deferred at the last meeting pending ADC adopting a new Code of Conduct. The draft ADC Code of Conduct was reviewed by this council’s Personnel Committee in January; the committee broadly agreed the new Code of Conduct, in principle, pending a review of the adopted ADC Code of Conduct in due course. Does that all make sense?!

The council received the following email on 4th March providing an update on the ADC Code of Conduct:

Dear Clerk

I write further to previous correspondence regarding the LGA’s new Model Code of Conduct, published in December 2020, and my email of 10 December 2020 advised you that I would be presenting a report to the Council’s Standards Committee at their meeting on 18 February 2021.

At that meeting, Committee agreed the following recommendations to Full Council:-

- 1) *Full Council notes that the adoption of a Code of Conduct for Members is merely one aspect of the overriding duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of Members;*
- 2) *The Local Government Association’s New Model Member Code of Conduct 2020 be adapted with the substitution of the Arun Appendix B for the LGA Appendix B and adopted in principle as the proposed Statutory Arun Member Code of Conduct; and*
- 3) *Where Committee agrees to 2 above, the Interim Monitoring Officer consult with the County Council and the ADC Parish Councils with a view to adopting a consistent code across Arun District.*

These recommendations will be presented to Full Council at their meeting on 17 March 2021 and we anticipate that Council will ratify the recommendations. In summary you will note that we have adopted the main body of the LGA Code because of its clarity and we have substituted the LGA appendices for the existing appendices in relation to declarations of interest.

Please find attached a copy of the Model Code (as adapted) and a copy of the adapted Appendix B. I have also attached a copy of the tracked changes version so that you can see what has been changed.

I would now like to invite you all to a meeting with myself so that I can talk you through the Code and answer any queries you may have. It is hoped that you will then be able to present this to your Council at an opportune meeting, and encourage their adoption of the new Code. I would strongly recommend adoption so that all levels of government across the district are working to the same Code. Not only does this help the Monitoring Officer role when dealing with standards matters, it also makes life easier for those twin-hatted Councillors who will only need to familiarise themselves with one Code for both roles. I will also be seeking confirmation from West Sussex County Council that they will be adopting this Model Code.

The meeting will be held virtually, via Zoom, and the proposed date is **Thursday 25 March at 10.00am**. Shirley will send you all electronic diary invitations – the joining details (meeting ID and passcode) will be issued 24 hours before the meeting. I do hope that you will be able to attend – Deputy Clerks are welcome. I also anticipate that one or more of our Independent Persons will also attend.

Regards

Solomon Agutu

Interim Monitoring Officer
Arun District Council

I will try and join the call on the 25th March, although I am on leave that day. Until the Code is adopted by ADC, I do not think we have much we can discuss on this yet. If any committee member wishes to see the latest documents now, just let me know.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

10th March 2021

The committee AGREED there was little they could discuss at this stage. The committee AGREED the Clerk could email the new ADC Code of Conduct around to them as soon as he had received notification of its acceptance on 25th March. The Code of Conduct would be put on this council's April Agenda for adoption. If members of this committee were concerned by anything they saw after 25th March, that Agenda item could be deferred until the committee had discussed any concerns further.

221/21 RETENTION POLICY

The committee NOTED the following report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Retention Policy

Committee is asked to begin consideration of a Retention Policy for the council.

The Personnel Committee is currently working on a Staff Handbook for the council. This work has thrown up a variety of policies and documents the Personnel Committee is working towards adopting. One of these is a Retention Policy. Cllr Gander has kindly drafted the document for you to consider. This can be found at Appendix A below.

Currently unable to access the relevant Legal Topic Note online, I have asked for SSALC to send me a copy so I can compare its content with the draft document below. If anyone would like to see that when I receive it, please get in touch.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

10th March 2021

Cllr Gander explained the background to this item. The committee AGREED Cllr Gander's suggestion paper bank statements should be kept for six years too.

The committee AGREED the Clerk's suggestion the table in the Annex to the document should include a fourth column explaining where retained documentation could be found.

The committee AGREED the Clerk should ascertain whether or not the council's tenants had their own Retention Policy. Depending upon the answers received, the Clerk could offer to share the policy used by the council.

Cllr Gander would look again at the word capacity in the third bulletpoint of Part 3 of the document. The Clerk had reported in the NALC Legal Topic Note on this matter, the word used had been incapacity.

The committee AGREED the policy, with the above changes, could be referred to Full Council for adoption.

222/21 LEASES WORKING PARTY

Cllr Mathias said the working party had still not met in this council year because he was not sure an effective meeting about the minutiae of leases could be held via an online platform. He was hopeful, with the government plan in place to lead the country out of lockdown, a face-to-face meeting could be held in the not-too-distant future.

Cllr Mathias asked what progress had been made in receiving a copy of the Village Hall Foundation's constitution. The Clerk remembered he had had discussions with the Chairman of the Village Hall on this matter but could not readily remember the outcome.

223/21 URGENT MATTERS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Cllr Gander reminded the committee the Clerk had circulated a document from the National Association of Local Councils last week, *The Good Councillor's Guide to Cyber Security*. Cllr Gander reported she was working through this document but felt it would be useful for two committee members to review the council's current Cyber Security status. Cllrs Wilkinson and Gunston volunteered. The Clerk would contact them to discuss this further.

224/21 MATTERS TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE NEXT MEETING (19TH JULY)

The Clerk reported the final Internal Audit for the financial year ending 31st March 2021 would have been held in May and the report would be considered by the committee at its meeting on 19th July.

The Meeting closed at 14.20.

Chairman: *Cllr Glyn Mathias* Date: **19th July 2021**