FAIR OAK & HORTON HEATH PARISH COUNCIL
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Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on Tuesday 6 May 2025 at 6.00pm at the Parish Office, 2 Knowle Park Lane, Fair Oak

Present: Cllrs Couldrey (in the Chair), Bird, Broomfield, Forfar, Higby, Marsh, Smith & Tennent

Apologies: Cllrs Barret, Chivuchi, Douglas, Meech & Stupple

Absent: Cllrs Anderson & Scott

Officers in attendance: Melanie Stephens, Clerk & Joanna Cahill, Finance Officer

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest raised.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present.

3. SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET RQUEST – PLAY STRATEGY

RESOLVED:

That £1,350 be taken from the Community Development Project Ear Marked Reserve to support the development to the Play Strategy.

Action: Joanna Cahill

4. EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS OF BURIAL CONCESSION REQUEST (REPORT A)

The Council considered a corporate complaint in association with the cemetery and proposed concession the details of which were set out in Report A to the Council.

Whilst acknowledging that the Council had followed the appropriate procedures and legal obligations in managing the cemetery and the associated safety inspections and being mindful of the potential risk of setting a precedent, the Council also recognised the individual circumstances raised by the complainant. Members expressed the view that (without prejudice) a gesture of goodwill was appropriate in this case.

As such, it was:

RESOLVED:

(a) That the Council grant a 50% concession on the current fee of £1,040 for the purchase of the Exclusive Rights of Burial for Plot 517, resulting in a payable amount of £520. This

decision was made without prejudice and shall not be regarded as establishing precedent for future cases; and

(b) That the Deputy Executive Officer be authorised to make the necessary administrative arrangements to give effect to this decision.

Action: Michelle Leadbitter-Allen

5. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

RESOLVED:

That, under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies Admissions to Meetings Act 1960, the public and the Press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information which would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of its confidential nature (staffing matters).

6. APPOINTMENT OF EXECUTIVE OFFICER & INTERIM STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

The Council considered the recommendation of the interview panel and subsequently the Finance Committee regarding the appointment of Executive Officer.

Both the panel and Committee recommended the appointment of Andy Lowe on the salary as advertised.

The Council noted that there would be a two-month overlap between the new Executive Officer starting and the current Clerk leaving. As such it was agreed that the current Deputy Clerk act as Clerk during the interim period.

As the Deputy Clerk would be on holiday from 7th to 21st July, it was agreed that a temporary Clerk be appointed during this period on a part-time basis (up to 16 hours per week). The cost of which (£960) be met from the existing staffing and sickness budget.

Additionally, due to reduced staffing, the Finance Committee recommended interim changes to public opening of the Parish Office, and it was suggested that for the duration of the interim period, the Parish Offices be closed to the public on Fridays. Staff would work from home and remain available via email and telephone.

To reduce pressure on staff during the transitional staffing period, it was noted that there would be no Full Council meeting in July and that the Finance Committee meeting scheduled for early July would be brought forward to 23rd June.

Following discussion on the recommendations of the Finance and Staffing Committee, it was:

RESOLVED:

(a) That Andy Lowe be appointed as Executive Officer for 37 hours per week on Scale Point 42 (subject to satisfactory references and employment checks);

(b) That the Deputy Clerk act as Interim Clerk for 30 hours per week being paid the current Clerk’s salary, prior to the Executive Officer’s formal start date;

(c) That an Interim Clerk be appointed for a two-week period (7-21 July) up to 16 hours per week, to cover the Deputy Clerk's holiday, with the current Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, being given delegated authority to advertise and appoint a suitable locum;

(d) That the costs associated with the appointment of the interim Clerk for a two-week period (£960) be met from the staffing & sickness budget; and

(e) That the Parish Offices be closed to the public on Fridays during the transitional staffing period.

Action: Melanie Stephens

7. OVERTIME PAYMENT

The Clerk informed the Council that the Community Engagement Officer had been working extended hours due to increased workload and evening/weekend events, in part resulting from successful grant funding and the overlap of the delivery of key council projects.

The Finance Officer explained that the overtime payment was only allowable in this instance as the postholder salary was funded via Section 106 monies. It was agreed that moving forward, no further overtime payments would be made, and time off in lieu must be used instead with better management of time being expected.

RESOLVED:

That an overtime payment be made as a one-off to the Community Engagement Officer via the section 106 ear marked reserve for this post.

Action: Joanna Cahill

Signed …… Chair.

Dated: …….

This was all the business, and the meeting closed at 6.40 pm.