

CHEPPING WYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Finance and General Purposes Committee

TUESDAY 27 MARCH 2012

The meeting which is open to the press and public will commence at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Cock Lane, Tylers Green, High Wycombe, Bucks HP10 8DS

Committee Members:	Cllr. I Forbes Chairman	Cllr. D Johncock
	Cllr. J Gurney Vice-chairman	Cllr. M Wilkes
	Cllr. C Dodds	Cllr. L Willis
	Cllr. S Herron	Cllr. Ms K Wood
	Cllr. J Herschel	

Members of the committee are summoned to consider the following business:

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies for absence.**
- 2. Declarations of members' interests in agenda items**
- 3. Registration of the council's properties**
- 4. Revision of fees, charges and allowances**
 - Gate permits and annual gate licence fee**
- 5. Employment of seasonal grounds man**
- 6. Investment of general and ear-marked reserves**
- 7. Accounts for payment**

Jeff Herschel
Clerk of the Council
19 March 2012

Registration of the council's properties

The council has previously agreed with the committee that all our land should:

- Be registered with the national Land Registry
- That the first block to be registered should primarily be those in Tylers Green
- That recognising the complicated nature of our land holdings in Tylers Green (in particular The Common and Kingswood) we retain the services of the council's lawyer to assist us in the process. A fixed fee of £8,000 plus costs was previously agreed for the first block of registrations (subsequently registration of the allotments in FH was added, though no fee was agreed at the time for this addition)

A schedule of both our land holdings and their current registration status is attached as Appendix A.

Members should not under-estimate how challenging and time consuming the process is proving to be. 'Searchlight focus' has also been shown to be necessary.

Part of the problems we faced and why the programme, started 2006, had stalled arose from the fact that the documentation required was not organised in a way that facilitated the process of registration. There was no systematic record of land owned and its registration status; no comprehensive list of documentation available; and parallel and overlapping filing systems, each started at various times. All have contributed to the complexity of the project. The first task was to go through and catalogue the council's historical archive, then integrate three separate office filing systems into one (though much detailed work is still required to put each section into better order).

Quite aside from finding not only all the necessary documents scattered through our systems, and often misfiled in some surprising locations, there is also the need to obtain Registry required current valuations of the land and to obtain information from utilities and other third-parties who have way-leaves or deeds of grant under or over our land. In preparing the necessary 'proofs' required by the Land Registry issues over un-resolved ownership disputes, and possibly encroachment, have come to light and which need to be resolved as part of the pre-registration process.

With assets as complex and historical as Kingswood and Tyler's Green Common and missing conveyances and documentation for other properties, we have a mammoth jigsaw to complete.

The process takes time and there is much yet to be completed, but thanks to the perseverance of our volunteer archivist the project is now well in hand and making good progress.

Members are asked TO NOTE the progress to date and consider and AGREE that the project should be continued to completion and that the clerk should, as permitted under the council's delegated powers, and in consultation with the chairman and vice-chairman of the committee - and taking into account 'best value' - agree necessary fees and costs from the committee's budget for legal fees.

AGENDA ITEM 4

Fees and charges - Gate permits and annual gate licence fees

At the meeting of the Amenity Land committee on Thursday 16 February 2012 and at the Leisure Facilities Committee meeting on Thursday 1 March 2012 the two committees CONFIRMED the council's policy of requiring those who wish to open up an access onto our land first obtain a licence to do so and RECOMMENDED for consideration by the council's F&GP Committee that the council now charge £50 for new licences to cover the premium for the concession and the council's initial administrative costs; and an annual fee of £30 to cover the council's costs of inspection of the status of the access and maintaining the register of licences. These fees are in line with those previously charged for the council, but uprated to take into account inflation since they were first set.

The committee is asked to CONSIDER the recommendation of the two committees and AGREE fees for the grant of the licence and annual fees, effective 1 April 2012.

AGENDA ITEM 5

Employment of seasonal grounds man

At the last meeting of the committee the issue of employing a seasonal grounds man was briefly discussed and it was agreed to defer further discussion to this meeting of the committee.

The council is faced both with an aging workforce and an increasing workload, not only because of additional areas being needed to be maintained (part of Totteridge Common has been returned to us for upkeep and Spring Lane is now thought to be our property) but also because of an extended growing season and higher expectations by members and our residents.

Members are asked to consider and if so minded AGREE to employing for up to six months a seasonal grounds man at a cost to the council of no more than £8,000 including on-costs. The cost to be funded from the carry-over of un-spent balances from the 2011/12 budget.

AGENDA ITEM 6

Investment of general and ear-marked reserves

TO NOTE: As agreed at the last meeting of the committee on Tuesday 17 January 2012 and endorsed by council on Tuesday 24 January 2012, the clerk with the agreement of the RFO has arranged to deposit £100,000 with the Co-operative Bank for a period of 12 months.

The vice-chairman of the committee has once again researched alternative schemes and believes the Co-op Bank provides both a satisfactory rate of return by comparison with other major banks (though it is a fluid situation) and the security the council needs to protect its interests. Further deposits for periods of up to 12 months are likely to be made in the new financial year, but as previously agreed by council, only after consideration by the chairman and vice-chairman of the committee of the alternative options recommended by the clerk.

AGENDA ITEM 7

ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

The accounts for payment are to be circulated at the meeting for the approval of members. Members are reminded to declare any personal or personal and prejudicial interests in any items submitted for payment.