

CROXLEY GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF the 283rd MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER
ON THURSDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2013

Present: Cllr Bennett in the Chair David Allison – Clerk to the Council

Cllrs Baldwin, Brand, Dann, Edmunds, Isard-Brown, Martin, Mitchell, Ridley and Shafe.

Not Present: Cllr Vane

Voting Members: 10

Members of the Public: 2

CC1188/13 Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllr Brading, Getkahn, Jordan, Seeley and Wynne-Jones.

CC1189/13 Declarations of Interest by Members

The Chairman (as Treasurer of the Croxley Green Society), Cllr Mitchell (as a Committee Member of the Croxley Green Society) and Cllr Brand (as Secretary of the Guild of Sport) - organisations who have benefited from Council Grants in the past, declared a non-pecuniary interest regarding item CC1194/13 on the Agenda. The Chairman continued and recommended that any other declarations of interest be made, if necessary, throughout the meeting.

CC1190/13 Representations from the Public

Representations were made by Mr Grant who stated he was Secretary of the Croxley Green Society and that the Society has benefited from Parish Council grants in the past and were very grateful that such grants ensured that events like Revels on the Green could be successfully organised. He continued that local groups and societies are usually operating on a 'shoestring' budget and that the flexible assistance by the Parish Council helps them enormously. Mr Grant added that to set a condition of a minimum of 3 quotes for groups seeking funding as set out in the Supporting Paper for the Agenda item might prove very restrictive to the individual groups. Mr Grant added that he felt sure that any group seeking funding would be prepared to provide the Council with whatever information was necessary for the Council to agree to funding and considered that the flexible system operated by the Council worked well and could see no constructive reason for the procedures to change.

Representations were made by Mr Saxon concerning Agenda item CC1194/13, Grants. Mr Saxon stated that the Supporting Paper to this item was clearly questioning the probity of Croxley Green Society and that the Cllr bringing forward this motion was being very selective in what was stated in the paper. He continued that this was a disgraceful approach and vindictive particularly as the Councillor's paper had been circulated widely to external people. Mr Saxon stated that the Internal and External Auditors have not found anything wanting in this area and that the proposals being put forward would take away discretion of the Council to seek further information as required. Mr Saxon said that even if the proposal for 3 tenders was successful what would the Council do with that information, as it was not for Council to determine the merits of each tender or to select a tender as this must be left to the party seeking financial assistance. To this end Mr Saxon stated that the existing arrangements worked well and provided the greatest flexibility for Council to determine the granting of financial assistance to third parties.

Mr Saxon concluded that he had become aware of an email sent by Cllr Ridley to external parties which questioned external groups probity and also made other wholly

inappropriate statements which have caused distress to him and his family and accordingly he would be making a formal complaint against Cllr Ridley.

The Chairman at this point proposed that under Standing Orders, Agenda item CC1194/13 Granting of Public Monies be moved up the Agenda. The proposal was agreed.

CC1194/13 Granting of Public Funds

The Chairman introduced this item and asked whether there was a seconder to Cllr Ridley's proposals. There being no other seconder, the Chairman stated that whilst he disagreed with the proposals he would second the matter in order that the Agenda item and proposals could be debated by Council.

The Chairman asked Cllr Ridley to elaborate. Cllr Ridley stated that the Council is responsible for the public funds and that Council should request from groups seeking funds for a project that they provide 3 quotes for the project.

It was pointed out that if such a condition was applied to the allocation of Grant monies, not all applications are conducive to a 3 quote approach particularly if the group was setting up and was seeking overall support for establishing something new and beneficial to the community. It was also pointed out that there could also be a niche product or service required emanating from the grant application which equally would not be appropriate for 3 separate quotes.

The Chairman stated that there appeared to be factual errors on Cllr Ridley's Supporting Papers and asked the Clerk to elaborate. The Clerk stated that in the opening paragraph of the paper it stated that it was a "a possible criminal offence" if the Parish Council did not set the lowest Precept. The Clerk added that this is incorrect in that any criminal offence could arise if Councillors failed to disclose a pecuniary interest under the Councillor Code of Conduct in setting the Precept as demonstrated recently when Members applied, and were granted, a Dispensation to discuss and agree the Precept.

The Clerk added that in Cllr Ridley's paper it gave the impression that the Council had required the Guild of Sport to supply 3 quotes when this was in fact incorrect. The Clerk referred to Minute CC935/11 (30 June 2011) in which the only condition placed on the Guild was that the balance of the funds they required for their project were raised and secured prior to the release of any Grant monies from the Council.

A Cllr pointed out that the cheapest price is not always the best and the focus on price may not be as important as the focus on quality. The Cllr continued that the Council, under the existing arrangements, has the ability to use its judgement whilst safeguarding the deployment of public funds and to call on additional information so there was no need to change a perfectly workable and simple system.

It was pointed out that different quotes may in fact not be a like for like comparison and Council should not be making a judgement on this aspect. It was also pointed out that as grant applications are considered at Council when all Members should be present, any questions or further information requirements can be raised at that time.

Cllr Ridley pointed out that his paper did not say anything about lowest quotes but it was commented, in response, that it could be implied from the nature of the wording of the supporting paper.

It was proposed that a vote be taken on Cllr Ridley's proposal but the Clerk pointed out that there would have to be amendment to Cllr Ridley's 'Recommendation' in his supporting paper as it was not structured correctly as it stated that "Council to recommend that". The Clerk added that as Council were considering the matter, to whom would it recommend the outcome. The Clerk suggested that perhaps Members should consider the wording of the Agenda item which summarised the

matter under debate which was whether Council wish to change, or not, existing Grant procedures.

The discussion reverted to Cllr Ridley's recommendation.

Resolved:

- that the word "recommend" in Cllr Ridley's recommendation be changed to "agree".

The Clerk read out the amended recommendation. A recorded vote was requested. Cllr Ridley voted For the amended proposal. Against the amended proposal were Cllrs Baldwin, Bennett, Dann, Edmunds, Isard-Brown, Martin, Mitchell and Shafe. Cllr Brand abstained.

Resolved:

- that Council do not agree with the proposal put forward that grants over £1,000 be subject to a minimum of three quotes and all groups supply council with their last three years accounts including the current years accounts.

CC1191/13

Minutes

Resolved:

- That the Minutes of the 282nd monthly meeting of the Council held on Thursday 31 January 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

CC1192/13

Matters Arising

CC1181.6/13 Matters Arising (FA867/12 Monthly Accounts). A Cllr raised the matter again of the monthly accounts not being circulated with the Finance & Administration Committee agenda. The Clerk stated that this has been raised by him on a number of occasions and the Minute clearly states the position in that at the time the Agenda is issued, the Monthly accounts are not prepared and therefore cannot be issued.

CC1178/13 Representations from the Public (CC1181.6/13). The Clerk was asked whether the Minutes of the meeting with the Community Association on 6 December 2012 had been circulated to which he replied that currently they have not been signed by the Chairman of the Association.

CC1186/13 The Green, Stones Orchard and other TRDC owned land within the Parish Boundary. The Chairman was asked what progress had been made on this matter. The Chairman reported that the Working Party had met prior to this meeting and that he had been appointed Leader of the Group which would be put forward for verification at the next Council meeting. The Chairman continued that the Working Party would be drawing up a list of the parcels of land that could be identified and any input on this from Members would be welcomed. The Chairman added that the Croxley Green Residents Association would be approached to join the Working Party and continued that once a draft list has been pulled together a further approach will be made to TRDC. The Chairman continued that in due course there will be a paper to the Environment & Amenity Committee prior to the matter being presented to a full Council meeting.

CC1180/13 Matters Arising (CC1166/12 Matters Arising (CC1158/12 Rickmansworth School Swimming Pool). A Cllr asked whether the meeting with Rickmansworth School had taken place to which it was reported that it had not.

CC1182/13 Village Centre Project. It was reported that the firm of architects that have been appointed to assist with this project was Chambers, Goodwin and Partners who are based in Rickmansworth.

- CC1193/13 Committee Reports
- CC1193.1/13 Environment and Amenity Committee Tuesday 8 January 2013
Resolved:
- That the Minutes of the Environment and Amenity meeting held on 8 January 2013 be adopted as a report of the meeting.
- CC1193.2/13 Any matters arising
EA935/12 Minutes. A Cllr raised the matter of the wrong date of the Minutes to be considered being on the Agenda. The Clerk referred to the Minutes of 8 January meeting where is clearly set out his apologies for the error. The Clerk added the Committee had accepted his apologies and were quite happy to consider the correct set of the Minutes that needed to be considered.
- CC1193.3/13 Planning and Development Committee held on Wednesday 2 January and Wednesday 16 January 2013
Resolved:
- That the Minutes of the Planning and Development Committee held on Wednesday 2 January and Wednesday 16 January 2013 be adopted as reports of the meetings.
- CC1193.4/13 Any matters arising
There were no matters arising.
- CC1193.5/13 Finance and Administration Committee held 10 January 2013
Resolved:
- That the Minutes of the Finance and Administration Committee held on 10 January 2013 be adopted as a report of the meeting.
- CC1193.6/13 Any matters arising
There were no matters arising.
- CC1194/13 Granting of Public Funds
See above.
- CC119513 Closure
There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.45pm.