



PULBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

Working together for a better future

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & POLICY COMMITTEE HELD VIRTUALLY USING MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 2020

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings (England and Wales) regulations 2020 (“the Regulations”) came into force on 4th April 2020. The Regulations enable local councils to hold remote meetings (including by video and telephone conferencing) for a specified period until May next year.

PRESENT: Cllrs: Clarke (Chairman), Court, Hare, Henly and Kipp

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs H Knight (Clerk and RFO)

The meeting opened at 7.35pm

106. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence had been received.

107. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND CHANGES TO REGISTER OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest or changes to register of interests made.

108. MINUTES

The Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the Minutes of the online Meeting held on Tuesday 23rd June 2020 as a true and accurate record of the proceedings, and that the Committee Chairman would sign the Minutes.

Clerk's Report

There was no report. The Clerk advised that there were two outstanding items she had been asked to check and report back on from the last meeting, regarding small overspends, which she had not yet had a chance to do. The Clerk would email members with findings when she had undertaken the checks.

109. ADJOURNMENT FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers.

110. PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES

Members received bank reconciliations for Cashbook 1 and 3 as at 30th April, 31st May, 30th June, 31st July and 31st August 2020. The Committee Chairman would

arrange to visit the office in order to compare reconciliations to bank statements, which would be duly signed by him if no issues were identified.

Following a query about potentially saving time for officers in printing the retrospective paperwork, the Clerk clarified that all monthly figures had to be entered on to the Rialtas accounting system, and reconciliations were then printed out as part of the routine of internal control process for the Committee to evidence reconciliation.

Members received a summary of income and expenditure compared to budget to 30th June 2020. A query was raised regarding Cost Centre 107 Staff Costs, which showed code 4000 Administration Salaries as 17.3% spent and overall Staff Costs as 10.2% rather than the expected 25% for end of first quarter. As the Committee Chairman had arranged to visit the office on Thursday 1st October for various required Minutes signatures, bank statement reconciliations and Q4 Internal Control Inspection to 31st March 2020, it was **AGREED** that he and the Clerk would go through expenditure matters at the same time and report back to Members.

Members received a statement of earmarked reserves as at 30th June 2020. It was noted that the previously approved publicity expenses for the Neighbourhood Plan Reg. 14 totalling £148.19 (for Village Gateway signs) had been transferred from the Neighbourhood Plan EMR.

The Clerk reminded members that CIL monies received were time-sensitive and must be spent or returned within 5 years of receipt. It was noted that officers were keeping a record

The Clerk reported that there were no creditor invoices over 30 days outstanding, other than those being dealt with under a separate agenda item which it had been agreed at the last meeting to 'pause' pending further discussion.

111. SPORTS PAVILION DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

This item had been added as a standing item in case any updates were available. As reported to full Council the previous week, the current position was that the registration with HDC for pre-planning application advice had been validated. The invoice for this was awaited, which the Clerk believed would be paid direct by the architect and then re-invoiced to the Council.

112. ALLOTMENT RENTAL REVIEWS FOR 2021/22 FINANCIAL YEAR

During last year's internal audit, the Auditor had advised that allotment rentals should be reviewed and notice given to tenants one year in advance of the amount to be charged. As letters/renewal agreements to plot holders are issued in October, it was therefore necessary to review these at this meeting so that the Deputy Clerk could write to plot holders from early October 2020 advising the 2021/22 rents.

It was noted that the 2020/21 rents set and advised in October 2019 would be increased by 3.2%. Following discussion, noting that the current RPI was 0.5%, it was **RESOLVED** that no increase would be made for the financial year 2021/22, and plot holders would be advised that the Council was keeping the amounts unchanged as a reflection of the impact Covid-19 had had on society in general.

113. PURPLE BUS (SUSSEX CLUBS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE / YOUTH CLUB)

The Youth Worker of the Purple Bus mobile youth club provided by SCYP (previously WSCC) had advised that SCYP had been notified by their landlord that they could no longer use the Youth Club premises at St Mary's School as it was required for the school use only. Due to Covid-19 SCYP is currently unable to utilise indoor premises but is still providing an outreach/mobile youth service and is actively seeking alternative premises. In the meantime, they had requested use of the Council's Multi-

Sports Facility (MSF) from Thursday 10th September 2020 each Thursday from 2.45-5.45pm. As a charity, they were seeking a favourable consideration from the normal charge. The Clerk advised that she had approved the temporary free use of the MSF until the Committee could discuss matters. Following considerable discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that SCYP be advised that from Thursday 1st October 2020 the usage would be invoiced at the discounted rate of £5/hr for times the facility is used but that use of floodlights would be included instead of charged as an extra during darker months.

114. INSURANCE RENEWAL AND REVIEW

Following review, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the annual renewal premium for 2020/21 from 1st October 2020 of the insurance policy cover with AXA under the Long-Term Agreement through Came & Co., at a total cost of £4,654.54 and that the invoice be paid.

115. CHANCTONBURY LEISURE CENTRE

The request from HDC for funding from parish councils to support a rescue package for the re-opening of Chanctonbury Leisure Centre was noted. This had been reported to Council on 17th September 2020 under Representations to Outside Bodies, as Cllr Clarke had attended a virtual meeting requested by HDC to review matters, but no formal discussion or decision had been taken under that item. The recommendation made at full Council last week had been that PPC could not offer financial support. Following formal discussion, it was therefore **RESOLVED** that HDC would be advised that with regret, no financial help would be possible from the Parish Council.

116. GRANT AID 2020

It was **AGREED** that a Working Party comprising Cllrs Kipp, Henly and Court would meet with the Clerk during early evening on a date to be arranged after the 30th September 2020 to initially sift applications and make recommendations to the next Committee meeting.

Cllr Kipp declared a personal interest in the following matter and did not take part in discussion

The Clerk advised that a request had been received from Age UK Horsham District for parishes to donate £100 to their Bags of Support initiative being rolled out from autumn 2020, all donors to have names printed on the bags. It was **RESOLVED** to approve making a £100 donation, subject to Council ratification, but that this may affect any other Grant Aid application the organisation makes this year, the £100 to be deducted from the total £5,000 Grant Aid budget. [Power used: LGA 1972 s137]

117. INTERNAL AUDITOR APPOINTMENT

It was **RESOLVED** to approve re-appointing Auditing Solutions Ltd as the Council's internal auditor for the 2020/21 financial year, at a cost of £890 + VAT for two visits of interim and final inspection. It was noted that the company's fees were remaining at the 2019/20 rate.

118. COVID-19 – TENANCY RENTS (DEFERRED FROM LAST MEETING)

This item included confidential matters but since no public were present no resolution to exclude press or public was made.

The Committee considered reports and correspondence received between the Clerk and some clubs. As agreed at the last meeting, clubs had all been advised that the Council was allowing a pause on rental payments to allow clubs to provide feedback on whether/how they had been affected financially by the Covid-19 lockdown. Reports had been received from Pulborough Cricket Club, Stoolball Club, Pulborough

Football Club and a partial report from Pulborough Snooker Club. The Clerk confirmed that the Stoolball and Football clubs had already paid their annual rents in advance. It was noted that the Sports & Social Club had successfully received a Government grant, and that the Council had also received a similar grant which would help to offset financial burden and loss of income. Each club was considered separately according to individual circumstances, and following lengthy discussion the following was **RESOLVED**:-

That Pulborough Sports & Social Club would not need to pay rent for the period they were closed from April-July 2020 inclusive due to Covid-19 restrictions, but would be re-invoiced for the insurance portion of those four months and from August 2020 onwards full invoicing would resume as normal;

That Pulborough Cricket Club would not need to pay their annual rent for the 2020 season they were unable to play due to Covid-19 restrictions and the Club's poor financial position;

That Pulborough Stoolball Club would be credited for the 2020 season they were unable to play, therefore having already paid their annual rent, the 2021 invoice would be adjusted accordingly;

That Pulborough Football Club, having already paid their annual rent invoice and only just starting their 2020 season, would be asked to keep the Council apprised of how things were for the Club, and matters kept under review for re-visiting if necessary;

That Pulborough Snooker Club be advised that insufficient information had been provided to reach a decision, and that the September 2020 annual rent invoice would be followed up should payment become overdue.

119. STAFFING – ANNUAL SALARY REVIEWS

This item included confidential matters but as no public were present, no resolution to exclude press or public was made.

The Clerk declared a personal and pecuniary interest in matters relating to her salary review and left the meeting during that part of discussion specifically related to her, returning to record the Committee decision.

Members noted confirmation from NALC of new national salary awards and pay scales for clerks and staff employed under the terms of the model contract, as agreed by the NJC and applicable from 1st April 2020. This resulted in a 2.75% increase to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk spinal column points, to be backdated to 1st April.

Members considered the annual review of all staff salaries, noting the Clerk's recommendations regarding other employees and that budgetary allowance of 2% had been made. The Clerk advised that she would leave the meeting at the point at which Members reviewed the Clerk's own salary. Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk and Deputy Clerk spinal column points would each remain unchanged, in light of the national increase already agreed at above budget and cost of living levels; It was further **RESOLVED** that all remaining/non-model contract employees, except one who had only joined the Council this year, would receive an increase of 1.5%, backdated to 1st April 2020.

The Clerk apprised Members of a confidential request by a member of staff and steps she had taken to deal with matters.

It was noted that staff appraisals, which are normally conducted before the end of the financial year and pay reviews, had not taken place yet due to the lockdown

restrictions and disruption to normal work processes in the past months. The Clerk had hoped to arrange online staff appraisals but had not been able to set this up as yet.

120. CORRESPONDENCE

Members received the Correspondence List, as below.

WSSC

Email 03.04.20 from Pension Strategist advising of publication of West Sussex Pension Fund (WSPF) final Valuation report and Funding Strategy on their website. These documents can be found here:

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/about-the-council/pensions/local-government-pension-scheme-lgps/pension-fund/>

Additionally, advising that new employee contribution rates can be found here:

<https://www.lgpsmember.org/toj/thinking-joining-how.php>

Additionally, advising that as part of the 2019 Valuation exercise they have updated the strain cost factors used to calculate the cash which an employer must pay whenever a member takes early retirement on unreduced benefits (strain costs). The new factors will be used for all early retirements processed from 1 April 2020 to tie in with the date that the new rates became effective.

NatWest Bank

- Publicity leaflet: Introducing Business Banking Switch - £4k cash potentially available plus other benefits, for switching banks, applications must be made to chosen participating bank by 28th February 2021.
- Letter advising that credit interest rate on deposit account/s will be decreasing

Business Stream (Scottish Water)

Letter June 2020 advising that 2020/21 wastewater charges are reducing by an average of 14%, which includes a rebate from the wholesaler, Southern Water, for past failings in the management and reporting of compliance at their wastewater treatment works. Water charges are increasing slightly because of recent changes to wholesale and retail charges introduced by the regulator Ofwat, however, if I receipt of both water and waste water from Business Stream, an overall reduction in charges should be seen in the year ahead.

121. PAYMENTS

Members had received electronic copies of two Payments for Authorisation lists covering payments already made on 21st August and 4th September 2020, and on 14th September 2020. It was **RESOLVED** to ratify those actions. Members had also received electronic copies of Payments for Authorisation list covering payments not yet made, dated 16th and 24th September 2020 and it was **RESOLVED** to approve those payments to be processed. All payment authorisation lists outstanding would be checked and signed by the two necessary signatories, Council Chairman and RFO at the next available physical opportunity.

The meeting closed at 9.45pm

.....Chairman

.....Date