



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 TUESDAY 23RD JUNE 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 (to Min.104), Hare, Henly and Kipp

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs H Knight (Clerk and RFO)
1 member of the public (*by conference call*) (part of meeting)

The meeting opened at 5.00pm

89. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence had been received.

90. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND CHANGES TO REGISTER OF INTERESTS

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

91. MINUTES

The Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 27th February 2020 as a true and accurate record of the proceedings, and that the Committee Chairman would sign the Minutes.

Clerk's Report

The Clerk had reverted to Pulborough Bowls Club with the Committee's explanation as requested. The club had responded with thanks for the helpful answers and would ensure future applications were more comprehensive in detail.

92. ADJOURNMENT FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers.

93. PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES

Members received bank reconciliations for Cashbook 1 and 3 as at 29th February 2020 and for Cashbook 1, 2 and 3 as at 31st March 2020. It was **AGREED** that the

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

Members received a summary of income and expenditure compared to budget to 31st March 2020. Following query as to why 4021 Rent/Room Hire was 9.4% over budget, it was felt that this was probably due to some additional Neighbourhood Warden and Neighbourhood Plan meeting room costs and the Clerk would check the reason. Following query about the allocation of the MSF salary (code 4004) being unspent, the Clerk advised that this had previously been rolled over in case of staff replacement when the MSF supervisor left. In the event, the administrative role has been absorbed into officer administration, but this was unrelated to the overspend on administration salaries (code 4000). The overspend of 21.7% on Stationery & Office (code 4025) was also queried and the Clerk would check this.

Members received a statement of earmarked reserves as at 31st March 2020.

The Clerk advised that Q4 internal control inspection to 31st March 2020 and Q1 to 30th June 2020 would need to be arranged as soon as practically possible. It was **AGREED** that the Committee Chairman would arrange to visit the office to undertake these, along with the bank statement reconciliations.

Members received a copy of the new budget for 2020/21.

The Clerk reported that there were 4 creditor invoices outstanding over 30 days: One for April rent Pulborough Sports & Social Club dated 12th May 2020, one for annual rent Pulborough Cricket Club dated 13th May 2020, one for seasonal fee Pulborough Stoolball Club dated 13th May 2020, and one for MSF Thursday Night Football March hire dated 6th March 2020. The Sports & Social Club and Cricket Club overdue income was the subject of a separate agenda item following requests from them. They had both been advised that the invoices were on hold pending Council discussion. The Clerk was looking into the overdue Stoolball Club invoice as no communication had been received, and the outstanding MSF football group invoice had been followed up.

94. **ANNUAL REPORT OF COUNCIL**

Members had received the draft Annual Report of Council however the Planning & Services Committee Chairman's Report was still awaited. It was **AGREED** that the Chairman of Council would liaise with the P&S Committee Chairman and revert to the Clerk: The Clerk would re-forward the previous year P&S Report to Cllrs Wallace, Hare and Clarke and if necessary the latter two would produce the committee report. The Clerk would then circulate the final whole report to the Committee for approval prior to publication.

It was **RESOLVED** that instead of distributing with the next quarterly Pulborough Community Bulletin, the Annual Report of Council would instead be published on the Council's website or available in hard copy on request.

95. **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

It was noted that the Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan would be commencing Reg. 14 public consultation on 8th July for an eight week period. Following discussion on potential publicity, utilising the Village Gateway signs or possibly a household leaflet drop, it was **RESOLVED** to approve authority for the Clerk and Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to arrange publicity up to a cost of £1,000 if needed.

96. **S106 AND CIL MONIES**

Members noted receipt of the latest HDC Unspent and Potential S106 Monies Report. Receipt was also noted of SDNP Neighbourhood portion of CIL funding payment of

£592.68. The Clerk reminded Members that CIL money does have some constraints on what it can be spent on, although it is within the financial control of the Council, and must be spent within 5 years or repaid.

97. SPORTS PAVILION DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Cllr Clarke advised that he had liaised with Ray Quested regarding updating the content of the previous project booklet to produce a new pamphlet to accompany funding applications. Ray Quested was producing a new cashflow projection. Cllr Clarke asked for the Committee to approve him intended then to send a copy to the Youth Club provider, (Sussex Clubs for Young People) as they have access potential funding sources. Cllr Clarke also wanted David Hurst (PCP) to have sight of it as he also had useful funding source knowledge. It was noted that SCYP also had a contracted bid writer who may be able to assist the Council with applications.

The Clerk confirmed that Studio 5 had been asked whether it was prudent now to proceed to either pre-planning application advice from HDC or even full planning application and their response was awaited. It was noted that the company was changing name and location at the end of July when the senior partner retired, but the architect is keen to continue working with the Council on this project. The Committee was asked to formally approve that the Council continued to contract the company – **RESOLVED**.

98. COVID-19 SMALL BUSINESS GRANT

The Clerk confirmed that a successful application had been made, despite initially being turned down as ineligible for Parish Councils, resulting in a £10,000 grant being paid into the Council's bank account. It was **AGREED** that this would be shown in financial accounts reports under Administration as a new income line entry 1078 named Small Business Grant Covid-19. It was understood the intention of the Government grant is to enable recipients to offset costs arising from the pandemic eg lost income, additional measures etc.

99. COVID-19 LEASE/LICENCE TENANCY RENTS

The Council had received requests from some tenant clubs for reconsideration of their rent due, as a result of the pandemic lockdown preventing them from being able to play matches (income source) and use the pavilion whilst it remains closed. Requests had been received from the Cricket Club and the Snooker club. The Clerk advised that invoices had continued to be issued but that clubs contacting PPC had been advised that a lenient approach was temporarily being taken on overdue rents until the Committee discussed matters. Separately, the Sports & Social Club had asked for further explanation and review of the annual increase process and the insurance element of their rent.

Following lengthy discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to defer a decision to the September meeting, when a clearer picture should be available as to how particular clubs had been affected financially by the Covid-19 lockdown. The Clerk would contact clubs to ask them to provide reports on their individual situations for consideration and confirm that a temporary pause on overdue rents was in place.

The Committee then discussed the request by the Sports & Social Club to review the process and decision of increasing their rent in April 2020 by 3.2% which differs from the April 2020 RPI figure. The process had been explained to their Treasurer by the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, however protracted correspondence had ensued, and the Committee were now asked for their view on the way forward. Additionally the club Treasurer was querying the element of insurance paid as part of their rent and the fact that this did not cover the club's own contents or enable the club to make an insurance claim through the Council's insurance.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** that the Sports & Social Club would be advised that the Council was firm in its view that correct process had been applied using the available information on the RPI at the time of the decision, which had been undertaken in autumn instead of April under instruction from the Internal Auditor. The club would be further advised, however, that the Council would not be pursuing overdue rents for the time being and would conduct a review in September when all pavilion users would have had an opportunity to advise how they had been affected by the lockdown period and financial impact.

With regard to their query regarding insurance cover, it was **AGREED** that the Council would expect the club to make a claim through their own insurance.

100. COVID-19 – PREPARATIONS FOR RE-OPENING SPORTS PAVILION

It was **RESOLVED** to approve reimbursing the Clerk the cost of providing 4 x hand sanitising stations (pump top sanitizer and bottle cage) for the three sports pavilion entrances, with one to be passed to the Sports & Social Club, together with the cost of cleansing spray and wipes for PPC office surfaces and Groundsman use. The cost was expected to be in the region of £100 or less.

It was noted that the Cricket Club had asked about the possibility of using the pavilion toilets during home matches but the Clerk understood this was not now relevant since the notification that the club would not be playing for the rest of the season anyway. It was **AGREED**, however, that any clubs requesting such use would be able to do so under current Government guidance as long as appropriate cleansing and risk assessments were in place by all parties.

101. NEW PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE

Members had received a quotation from JNR Computer Services of £1,200 + VAT, as per the Council budget, for design, installation, hosting and maintenance of a new Council website. Members sought reassurance on the levels of design quality and requested that an alternative quotation from an alternative provider be obtained for comparison before a decision is made. It was **RESOLVED** that JNR Computer Services would be asked for more information on how their proposals could be made more aesthetically and practically user-friendly and a second quotation would also be sought from Vision ICT.

Cllr Hare declared non-pecuniary interest in the following item as Chairman of APCAG

102. APCAG – SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to renew the annual subscription to APCAG at a cost of £100.

103. POCKET PARK – RESIDENT REQUEST REGARDING TREE

Members had received a request from a resident to cut back a hybrid black poplar in Pocket Park that was causing health issues for a family member when seeds dispersed into their garden and home. Members noted receipt of the Deputy Clerk's report regarding works for non-urgent P1s, P2s and Tree Warden recommendations (including the tree in question). The Committee was being asked to consider this item as no Recreation & Open Spaces Committee meetings were currently being arranged. The Committee had received two quotations for the work.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve that the remainder of the Tree Inspection Works, which were non-urgent P1s, P2s and the Tree Warden's recommendations be carried out as discussed at the R&OS committee meeting of 10.10.20 (Min.46 refers) as part of autumn works, ie after August 2020 to avoid disturbance to nesting birds. This was within budget and included the hybrid black poplar tree in question, and it was agreed that this tree would be prioritised.

104. CORRESPONDENCE

Members received the Correspondence List, as below. It was **AGREED** that the resident who had until recently voluntarily carried out vegetation clearance in the village would be sent a letter of thanks from the Council. The Clerk drew attention to the NALC Code of Conduct consultation and asked if Members wished this to be taken to full Council or responded to. Members did not wish to take the matter forward.

RESIDENTS

Email 17.04.20 request from several residents for PPC to write letter of thanks to another resident who until recently regularly cut back overgrown vegetation on local footpaths/footways (under his own volition). The resident has apparently now posted notices saying he will no longer be doing this. (Name and address provided to Clerk).

Does the Committee wish the Clerk to write to the resident?

NPOWER BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

Email 12.03.20 advising of arrangements for installation of Smart Meter at pavilion. The new meters have a SIM card which the supplier can dial into each month to obtain the reading, saving customer needing to either take readings or provide access. There are no costs as it is part of the Government / Elexon mandate to have all meters as SMART / AMR nationally. Installation arrangements yet to be made, delayed following COVID-19.

WSCC

Email 02.06.20 from WSCC Pension Strategist: WSPF Deferment of Employer Contributions, attaching new policy setting out how the Fund will consider granting of flexibility in respect of payment of employer contributions during these unprecedented times.

(Copied to C'ttee)

NALC

Email 16.06.20 advising of Model Member Code of Conduct Consultation, open until 17.08.20 – NALC calls on government to introduce sanctions to support the proposed Code of Conduct. LGA and NALC have worked together to take forward the recommendation from the Committee on Standards in Public Life to develop an updated national model code of conduct for all tiers of local government. The LGA is now consulting on the proposed national model member code of conduct (<https://www.local.gov.uk/local-government-association-model-member-code-conduct>) and NALC is urging all local councils and county associations of local councils to consider the proposed code and respond to the LGA. NALC is also calling on the government to take urgent action to introduce the recommendation in the report for a new power for local authorities to suspend councillors for a period of up to six months. "Failure to introduce this sanction alongside other measures will risk wider steps being taken to improve ethical standards, such as the model code of conduct and training for councillors and clerks, as being ineffective."

GRANT AID 2019/20

- Pulborough Lunch Club: Letter of thanks 01.03.20 for the £200 donation and invitation for Cllrs to join them for Wednesday lunch (*copied to C'ttee*);
- Victim Support: Summary report 17.06.20 of how the Council's donation has been spent on volunteer training (*copied to C'ttee*).

DAISY COMMUNICATIONS

Letter 27.02.20 advising of price increases in line with RPI from 01.04.20, using February 2020 RPI of 2.7%.

105. PAYMENTS

The Clerk advised that there were no payments to ratify because currently essential payments/invoices were being dealt with under delegated authority as they arose. Payment authorisation lists would be duly signed as required once arrangements had been made for physical signing.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm

.....Chairman

.....Date