



PULBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

Working together for a better future

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & POLICY
COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 22nd OCTOBER 2015
AT THE SPORTS PAVILION**

PRESENT: Cllrs Clarke (Chairman), Kipp, Reddin, Tilbrook & Wallace.

IN ATTENDANCE: Sarah Norman (Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer).

The meeting opened at 7.30pm

40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Qusted.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

42. MINUTES

The Committee **RESOLVED** to agree and approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th September 2015 as a true and accurate record of the proceedings and the Chairman of the meeting signed them.

CLERKS REPORT

Item 32 - Parish Council Finances

Cllr Qusted is still to carry out the quarterly review as per the Internal Control Policy as agreed.

Item 34 - Grants

As Val Wilson has now resigned, it was agreed at Full Council that Cllr Reddin will review the applications on his own. His recommendations will be on the agenda for the November meeting.

43. ADJOURNMENT FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no members of the public that had given notice of wishing to speak.

44. PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES

Members received Bank Reconciliations for cashbook 1 and 2 as at 30th September 2015. Members confirmed their agreement to the Bank Statements and instructed the Chairman to sign the bank statements accordingly.

Members received a summary of Income and Expenditure compared to Budget for the 2015/16 year as at 30th September 2015. Members also received a summary from the Clerk of explanations as to major variances to the budget, which is attached as Appendix 1.

Members also received a projection of the anticipated income and expenditure projected through to the year end of 31st March 2016.

Members noted that the only invoice which was more than 30 days overdue was the Snooker Club rent. Members noted, however, that they would be paying this in 4 instalments throughout the year and had made the 1st payment of £212.50 on 29th September 2015.

Finally, Members received a summary of the earmarked funds including interest up to 30th September 2015.

45. BUDGETS FOR 2016/17

Members received an initial draft budget as prepared by the Clerk. It was noted that this was very much a starting point and Members will make alterations as discussions progress at the November 2015 F&P meeting.

The Clerk advised that the general reserves (i.e. those not specifically earmarked for a specific project) stood at £128,000 at the end of the 2014/15 financial year which equates to 73% of the income from the precept and HDC grant for 2015/16. Members noted that, as per Part 2 of the Governance and Accountability for Local Councils as published by NALC, general year end reserves higher than the precept would require an explanation to the Auditor. It is generally considered that general reserves of 50% to 75% of the annual precept are acceptable and therefore the Council is at the upper end of this scale and should not be looking to substantially increase these reserves.

The Members reviewed the initial draft, by individual cost centre, and noted the following :-

- Budgets had been increased by 2% where the projected year end figure is close to budget.
- No increase has been included for salaries
- An assumption has been made that the grant from HDC will reduce by 50% to £3650. The actual amount of grant is unknown at the present time and could be removed altogether.
- A budget of £22,000 has been included for Community Wardens under Staff Costs but the final decision on this is still to be agreed by Council.
- The budget for superannuation costs has had to increase substantially to take into account the impact of the Auto Enrolment legislation.
- The contingency fund has been reduced to £3000 as the previous budget of £8000 is rarely used and with general reserves at their current level, these could be seen as an alternative contingency fund.
- No budget will be included for Neighbourhood Planning as the costs of the referendum will be met by HDC.
- Christmas Lighting will continue to have 50% of its costs met by the earmarked reserves. However, it was noted that the earmarked reserves will be fully depleted by the end of the 2016/17 financial year and therefore the full costs will need to be included in the 2017/18 budget.
- Highways Equipment should be increased from £200 to £700 to allow for two new grit bins to be purchased ready for winter 2016.
- Hanging baskets are drastically reduced from last year as the actual costs were much lower than anticipated.
- Water for the pavilion has been increased as this will be over budget for 2015/16. It was noted, however, that as this includes the cost of water for the cricket square this will be dependent on the weather of summer 2016.
- The Tractors and Equipment budget has been reduced as the previous year included allowance for the purchase of the new machine. It was noted that there should still be sufficient budget to allow a sum to be earmarked at the end of 2016/17 to fund future equipment.

- Both the NCRG and Pocket Park budgets have been decreased as the requirement is lower than anticipated.

Members noted that, taking into account the above, a precept of £182,403 would be required an increase of £6,885 from the 2015/16 precept of £175,018 or 4%.

Cllr Tilbrook raised the prospect of further cuts at District & County level and how the Parish may look to fill any gaps. The Clerk stated that it would be difficult to budget for this as there is no knowledge of any scope or costs. However, Members noted that with such healthy general reserves, the Council could resolve to use some of these to fund a project should the need arise during the year.

46. RISK REGISTER

Members reviewed the register and after discussion, updated entries A8, A11, F1, F2 & F3 of Administration schedule; 1, 7, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 22 of Governance & Management schedule; R2, R4.2 of Recreation & Open Spaces Schedule.

Entry A5 on the Administration register should be removed as the Quality Council scheme is no longer operational.

RESOLVED: Updating of the Risk Register is approved and proposed for ratification to Council.

Cllr Tilbrook raised the length of the register and whether its size made the document unworkable. It was therefore AGREED, that over the winter the Clerk and Cllr Tilbrook should prepare a recommendation to Full Council on a streamlined register to ensure that this process is fit for purpose.

47. STAFFING UPDATE

Members noted that the cost for the Assistant Clerk to complete CiLCA 2015 will be £570. After discussion, it was AGREED that the Assistant Clerk should proceed with the qualification.

The Clerk also advised that the Groundsman had been on a three day City & Guilds course for chainsaw use and maintenance. It was noted that expenditure on a chainsaw and safety equipment/clothing will be necessary.

Members went on to discuss the possibility, in the future, of employing a junior for the Groundsman to help with day to day duties.

Due to its nature, the remainder of the item was deemed as confidential.

The Clerk then gave an update to Members on other staffing issues.

48. CORRESPONDENCE

RBS Rialtas

Notification of increase for Alpha accounting software charges for 2016/17; 2% or £4.50 per annum.

LASER

- i) Long range price forecast 2015. Copied to Council.
- ii) Renewal of electricity prices for next 12 months. Decrease in p/kwh charge and Increase in standing charge. Net effect when compared to most recent bill would result in a decrease of £4.49.

PCP

Email from Les Ampstead with details of Sport England funding. Copied to Council.

- 49. MATTERS RAISED BY COUNCILLORS FOR INCLUSION ON NEXT AGENDA**
It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be on Wednesday 11th November.
 Budget 2016/17

ITEMS FOR PUBLICATION VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Post Office – to advise that the Parish Council continues to be aware of the concerns of residents on the lack of a Post Office in the village and continues to work with the PCP in their efforts to liaise with Post Office Counters Ltd and residents are welcome to email/write to their MP to voice the concerns.

50. PAYMENTS

Members received, considered and approved with all in favour payments to be made.

RESOLVED: that the payment of the following Direct Debits and Cheques be approved and signed:

	£
Viking	105.98
S Norman	4.50
Travis Perkins Trading Co Ltd	3.62
CPRE	36.00
Action in rural Sussex	2277.54

The meeting closed at 8.52pm

.....Chairman

.....Date