



# 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 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2019 AT THE SPORTS PAVILION**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs H Knight (Clerk and RFO)

*The meeting opened at 7.40pm*

**49. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr Quedstedt (personal commitment) and Wallace (work commitment), and the absences approved by the Committee.

**50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND CHANGES TO REGISTER OF INTERESTS**

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

**51. MINUTES**

The Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2019 as a true and accurate record of the proceedings. The Committee Chairman duly signed the Minutes.

Clerk's Report

With regard to potential funding sources for the Sports Pavilion, the Clerk reported on Billingshurst Parish Council's recent successful PWLB application and gave the Committee Chairman a printout of the loan details.

**52. ADJOURNMENT FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING**

There were no public speakers.

**53. PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES**

Members received bank reconciliations for Cashbook 1 as at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019 (circulated). The reconciliation statement for Cashbook 3 was not yet available and would be dealt with at the next meeting. Agreement to bank statements was confirmed, which were duly signed by the Committee Chairman.

Members noted the quarterly comparison of Income and Expenditure to budget as at 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019 (circulated).

Members received a statement of Earmarked Reserve funds as at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019 (circulated).

Reporting on outstanding creditor invoices over 30 days, the Clerk advised that the previously reported overdue payment from HDC of £66 had now been paid. There were currently two allotment rent invoices outstanding from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019, totalling around £67. One tenant had had health issues and had now made arrangements to pay in late November. The other tenancy debt was being followed up.

#### 54. **BUDGET FOR 2019/20**

The Clerk reported that the Internal Auditor had conducted the interim audit 2019/20 today. The auditor had advised that the Council should by law be giving one year's notice to allotment tenants of rental increases. She had also pointed out that all rental income should be reviewed as part of budget setting rather than in the approach to the new financial year. Additionally, she had commented that it was not necessary to use the RPI as a basis for increases, as any change is entirely at the discretion of the Council. As a result, it was necessary for the Finance Committee to undertake rent reviews at this meeting.

Following discussion, Members felt that the RPI rate provides a useful indicator of economic markets and this practice would be retained. It was **RESOLVED** that all allotment and club tenants would be advised that rents would be increased by 3.2%, as per Q3 and Q4 2019 RPI, except where legal agreements do not permit, and in combination with other terms dictated in lease/licence agreements. Allotment plot tenants would be written to immediately to meet legal requirements and club tenants advised in due course in line with existing practice for their rent renewals.

Members had received an amended draft budget with the agenda in light of discussion at the previous meeting, which had produced savings of £15,570 with a revised budget of £236,564 and a precept increase of 10.5%. The Clerk went through those amendments and additional updated information available subsequently, together with other potential amendments: -

- Code 4015/Audit Fees: reduced to £1300, additional saving £300
- Code 4021/Rent/Room Hire: reduced by £100, additional saving £200
- Code 4037/IT Support: reduced to £2000, covers annual IT support, new website to be funded from Community Benefit Fund EMR, as previously agreed
- Code 4004/MSF Salary: removed giving additional saving £3,264
- Code 4007/Neighbourhood Wardens: increased by £1,200 to £61,500 (incorrect projection previously)
- Code 4092/Pavilion Rebuild: Removed, as previously agreed
- Code 4220/Hanging Baskets: Removed, as previously agreed
- Code 4360/Boiler & Shower: Increased to by £50 to £350
- Code 4399/Rivermead: Reduced to £300, additional saving £200
- Code 4396/Pocket Park: Increased to £950 as R&OS agreed planned improvements – contractor ground prep work £850 + £100 general costs
- Code 4397/Youth Worker: Increased to £14,500, as previously agreed

Taking the above bullet points into account produced a revised precept requirement of £234,900. Taking account of increased income from rent increases agreed earlier further reduced this to around £234,500 precept requirement. Members discussed the changes and agreed that this resulted in a likely increase on last year in the region of 9.5%. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the foregoing changes being incorporated into a revised budget. Members discussed the need to increase the general reserves held in order to bring available funds to an acceptable level of 3-6 months' operational costs, in line with best practice. The Clerk was asked to produce a revised budget after checking calculations to achieve a precept requirement of around 9.75% increase. It was felt that this could be justifiably presented to public with clear explanations regarding the need to increase reserves and fund the Neighbourhood

Warden Scheme. It was noted that the HDC council tax base was unlikely to be confirmed until late November/December therefore all figures would be approximate until that point. Members wished the draft budget to be available initially for the November Council meeting, noting that the final budget and precept would be decided and set at the January 2020 Council meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** to Council the revised draft budget resulting from the foregoing at a level as close as possible to 9.75%, subject to the Clerk's final adjustment and confirmation of the HDC tax base.

**55. SPORTS PAVILION REFURBISHMENT PROJECT**

The Clerk updated Members on the current position regarding the architect, Studio 5, seeking quotations on behalf of the Council for the over-roofing as agreed by Council following the Structural Survey Report. A deadline of 22<sup>nd</sup> November had been set for return of quotations.

The Clerk had had lengthy discussions with the architect and it was felt that the over-roofing quotes would need to feed into assessment of overall viability of the project. Additionally, Studio 5 had now submitted a fee proposal for project management of the scheme, which would need to be considered by Council. It was recommended that a meeting of the Sports Pavilion Development Working Group be convened to reassess all aspects of the project and review direction. The November Council agenda would include discussion of returned quotes, fee proposal for project management and convening of the Sports Pavilion Development Working Group.

**56. STAFFING MATTERS**

As there were no public present, no resolution to exclude press/public was made. The Clerk gave a confidential verbal report regarding employee compassionate leave, ill health, annual leave and transport issues.

**57. ITEMS FOR NEXT F&P AGENDA**

- Sports Pavilion – Update on project progress, including Business Case.

**58. CORRESPONDENCE**

None received.

**59. PAYMENTS**

Following consideration, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the following payments, and these were duly authorized:

£	
CCLA	296.34
Mark Weston	300.00
Pulborough Social Centre	117.60
National Westminster	9.10
Daisy Communications	25.79

***The meeting closed at 9.05pm***

.....Chairman

.....Date