



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 25TH FEBRUARY 2021

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 7th May 2021.

PRESENT: Cllrs: Clarke (Chairman), Court, Hare, Henly (to Min.174) and Kipp

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs H Knight (Clerk and RFO)
Cllr E Hunt (observing)

The meeting opened at 7.32pm

163. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted, and reason approved, from Cllr J Esdaile.

164. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND CHANGES TO REGISTER OF INTERESTS

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

165. MINUTES

The Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the Minutes of the online Meeting held on Thursday 28th January 2021 as a true and accurate record of the proceedings, and that the Committee Chairman would sign them.

Clerk's Report

Min.152 - Covid-19 Grants: The Clerk had successfully applied for other government Business Support Grants being administered via HDC and reported that two further grants of £6001 and £476 had been awarded.

Buildings Insurance: In responding to the communications from the insurance broker regarding premises compulsorily closed during lockdowns, it had emerged that the broker (Came & Company) would need to refer the matter to the insurer, who may decide to reduce the Council's cover. The Clerk would be providing Came & Company with further details requested on the sports pavilion premises being out of use and keep the Committee/Council informed.

166. ADJOURNMENT FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers.

167. PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES

Reconciliations to 31st January 2021 were not available and would instead be taken to the March meeting with February figures. The Clerk had recirculated bank reconciliations for Cashbooks 1, 2 and 3 for November and December 2020 for information (discussed at previous meeting).

It was noted that the Q3 inspection to 31st December 2020 had been completed by Cllr Clarke.

The Clerk reported that creditor invoices of over 30 days outstanding were MSF hirers, with amounts of £143 and £5 being followed up by the Deputy Clerk. If payments remain unpaid the groups in question would not be allowed future bookings. Other non-payments were related to sports pavilion tenants, under separate ongoing discussion.

168. EARMARKED FUNDS

The Clerk had recirculated the Income & Expenditure report and Earmarked Reserves report discussed at the last meeting, as the latest available financial details. This was in order to give some early thought to anticipated year end movement of unused funds, although final decisions would be made at the March meeting when up to date figures were available.

Whilst discussing CIL funds received, it was noted that CIL funding could be applied for for replacement/refurbishment and may be an avenue available to PPC for the sports pavilion refurbishment element of that project.

It was unlikely that further funds would need to be added to the MSF Resurfacing/ Playground EMR. Similarly Pocket Park and Cousins Way EMRs would not need funds. The Neighbourhood Plan EMR was unlikely to need the full £7,574 balance and potentially perhaps up to £5,000 could be transferred out, leaving an amount to cover any remaining publicity costs. The Clerk understood that HDC were obligated to cover both the Independent Examination and Referendum stages so PPC would only need to assist in supporting public awareness. The Neighbourhood Wardens EMR would probably no longer be necessary since the funding of the posts had now been absorbed into general reserves and precepting. The Clerk reminded Members that the community Benefit Fund EMR was primarily to be used to pay for the new website, but there may be a small balance left.

It was agreed that any remaining unspent balances at the year end should be transferred to the Pavilion Refurbishment/Tractor Shed EMR. This would be discussed and formally dealt with at the March meeting, subject to any further information at that time.

169. SPORTS PAVILION DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Clerk reported that she had met with an engineer from Wychwood Environmental, who had been appointed to prepare the environmental statement needed for validation of a full planning application. The report findings were anticipated within the next couple of weeks but it appeared that there was no evidence of bat or other protected species. Query was raised regarding HDC reference in pre-planning application to the tree line along Chestnut Grove, and the Clerk was asked to find out if this would need to be addressed with a full planning application.

170. INTERNAL CONTROL POLICY

Members considered the amended Internal Control Policy (previously circulated). The only change was that the final page had been updated to incorporate clearer and more pertinent information for councillors conducting the inspections to provide clear recording of the process. Following consideration, it was **RESOLVED** to recommend to full Council the adoption of the amended Internal Control Policy with no additional amendments proposed.

171. SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Members considered the newly drafted Social Media Policy (previously circulated). Following the committee Chairman's proposal, the Committee agreed to allow Cllr Mrs Hunt to add to the debate. It was agreed that the Clerk would at some point investigate whether there was a need for a Communications Policy.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to recommend to full Council the adoption of the Social Media Policy without amendment.

172. POLICY AND PROTOCOL FOR MARKING THE DEATH OF THE SOVEREIGN OR SENIOR ROYAL

Members considered this newly drafted policy (previously circulated). The Clerk advised that this was something that she had intended to put before Members for some time. It was not anticipated that the Parish Council would undertake especial responsibility in the event of the death of a prominent national figure and directions would in the main be issued via the Lord Lt or High Sheriff of the County, or from the principal authorities. It was, however, prudent to have in place a document that could be utilised at short notice if needed to ensure correct protocol was followed early on.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend that full Council adopt the Policy and Protocol without amendment.

173. STAFFING

Members noted that under the employer's duty of care to employees, and with the increased amount of working from home, the Council should ensure appropriate working conditions were in place as far as possible to safeguard staff whilst undertaking council business. It had been identified whilst undertaking work station assessments that the Deputy Clerk needed a suitable work desk and chair for remote working. This could be purchased at a maximum cost of £160. It was **RESOLVED** to approve that the Deputy Clerk purchase a desk and ergonomic office chair for home-working and be reimbursed up to a maximum of £160.

The Clerk reported that some staff appraisals would be taking place on 26th February 2021, with others to be undertaken shortly at a date yet to be arranged.

174. CORRESPONDENCE

Members received the Correspondence List, as below.

West Sussex Pension Fund

Email 15.02.21 from Hants Pensions Employer Services: Government has announced on 12th February 2021 that the £95k cap should be treated as if it never applied and the Regulations are to be revoked. This means that for exits from 12th February 2021, an unreduced pension will be paid to a scheme member leaving on redundancy or business efficiency grounds and Scheme employers will be required to pay full strain costs in relation to those unreduced benefits, as per the current LGPS regulations.

CCLA

Email 15.02.21 from Jamie Charters Cash article – With your cash reserves now earning less, extra prudence is required (*copied to C'ttee*)

SSALC

Email 18.02.21 from Trevor Leggo: Borrowing Approval Applications: Applications to the Secretary of State for borrowing money for capital schemes are taking around three months, largely due to Covid and the redistribution of staff in MHCLG. If planning any projects that require borrowing approval, SALC suggest you should factor in a longer period than usual.

Cllr Henly left the meeting at this point due to technical failure.

175. PAYMENTS

Members had received the list of Payments for Authorisation. It was **RESOLVED** to approve these, detailed below, and the payments list and invoices would be signed by the required two signatories at the earliest opportunity.

£

Pulborough Social Centre	38.04
Business Stream	3.12
Business Stream	189.16
Business Stream	14.08
Floodlighting Services Ltd	442.80
Burgess & Randall Ltd	17.98
Fire Risk UK	244.42
Kent County Council	165.71
National Westminster	1.05
Daisy Communications	26.48

The meeting closed at 8.29pm.

.....Chairman

.....Date