

HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes: **Policy and Finance Committee** held on Monday 8th March 2021

Present Cllrs:

J Knight (Chairman)
C Ash-Edwards (Vice Chairman)
R Bates
R Cromie
C Evans
C Laband
R Nicholson
M Pulfer

Apologies ** Absent *

Also present: Steven Trice (Town Clerk), Andrew Sturgeon (RFO).

48. Apologies

None.

49. Minutes

The minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee held on 18th January 2021 were taken as read, confirmed as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.

50. Substitutes

None.

51. Declarations of Interest

None.

52. Payments and receipts and income and expenditure reports for the period 1st December 2020 – 31st January 2021.

Members had before them the list of payments and receipts and income and expenditure reports for the period 1st December 2020 – 31st January 2021. The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) presented the reports and welcomed questions.

- It was asked reference, page 15 item 5 Fox Hill Sign (£1,000), if the money had been spent. The RFO confirmed that no money had been paid and it was to be held in a reserve for maintenance work.
- It was questioned why travel expenses had increased during lock down? It was noted that during lock down an agreement was reached that Groundstaff would use their own vehicles to get to sites, if they were not in charge of one of the vans, so to reduce social contact. Staff using their own cars were paid mileage.
- It was asked what Graffiti was being removed and where? The Town Clerk explained the Town Council removed such from MSDC parks and WSCC highway as part of partnership agreements with the principal authorities and of course the Town Council's land holdings
- With regard to a Monastery payment it was asked what this referred to as the Town Council had no links to such. The (RFO) explained that it was money received for tending the nun's burial area at Western Road to a higher standard than the rest of the site. This was a quarterly payment, which had been a long-term arrangement.

Members then **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council the list of payments and receipts, and income and expenditure for the period 1st December 2020 – 31st January 2021.

53. Grants.

The Town Clerk presented one grant from Sussex Club for Young People for running costs. The work of the applicant was commended in the Bentswood Ward, especially the with the Food Larder, and it was noted that they were doing a lot more work in the local in area, which may Bentwood be not so well recognised that the work coming out of Saltworks. It was then asked where the underspend of the grant budget, within year, would be apportioned to? It was noted that it would be moved into un-restricted reserves and not held over for the 2021/2022 budget.

Members **RESOLVED** to **award a grant of £250 to Sussex Clubs for Young People towards running costs.**

54. Financial Risk Assessment

The Town Clerk presented the Bentwood Town Council's financial risk assessment for its annual review. It was noted that an additional line had been placed into the assessment in relation to the ongoing threat to the Town Council resulting from Covid 19. This was on the basis that, even though generally the country was moving out of lockdown, there still would a period where the confidence of returning hirers would be low and that the Council's income would be affected. It was then asked what the definition of Short/Medium/Long were as presented in the assessment. The Town Clerk explained that a three-year review was required and would be short term when the document was created but now the overarching GALP internal audit regulations were more stringent so the document was reviewed every year. With regards to loss of revenue it was asked why this was covered under insurance. It was noted this was in relation to business interruption cover. At the present time, with case law moving forward, there may be an opportunity claim for the loss of hiring's due to Covid 19. As a result, Hiscocks, the are holding a claim for the Council for loss of income for the last year. It was pointed out that lockdown started before 1st April 2021 so it would be worthy checking both 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 financial years were being looked into. The matter of the loss of space and in turn income from the Council's Allotments and Cemetery was raised as the need for such provision had been a matter of urgency from for over a decade and it should be discussed as time is very tight with burial space. It was noted that it was a risk that the Environment and General Purposes Committee were to manage and it was not for debate under the item, but Members were assured that the Town Council has done everything in its power to progress the cemetery, country park and all9otmmnets. It was also noted that a very close eye has been kept on burial numbers during the pandemic and fortunately it had not resulted in increased pressure fortunately. Without further comment;

Members **RESOLVED** to **adopt the Town Council's Financial Risk Assessment for 2021.**

55. Restricted and Unrestricted Reserves Review

Without comment and members statin that they were content with the levels of restricted reserves and the rationale for their proposed future use and the reasoning that they were being held,

Members **RESOLVED** to **note the position of the Town Council's restricted and unrestricted reserves as of the 31st January 2021.**

56. Health and Safety Policies

Members noted the documents in turn and thanked officers for their work. This was especially noted in regards to the Covid 19 risk assessments.

Members **RESOLVED** to **adopt the following Health and Safety documents.**

- a) Health and Safety Policy
- b) Risk Assessment Form
- c) Fire Risk Assessment
- d) Covid 19 Risk Assessment

57. Insurance Policy Renewal

The RFO presented the report, which presented an update of on the trail year of the Town Council's insurance with Hiscox. It was felt by Cllr Pulfer that this course of action to move to a three-year deal was not a satisfactory course of action on the grounds that the Town Council should return to the market place and look for other insurers and that a broker should be engaged to get quotes. It was stated by the Town Clerk that this work had been undertaken, Caine and Company were the Council insurance broker/advisor and the one-year agreement has been agreed by the Committee to see the way to a longer agreement if officer were happy. Cllr Pulfer was also reminded that there was a limited number of insurers in the Town/Parish sector and that officers had tested the wider market through, but companies were way off the deals offered by proven sector providers. With this Cllr Pulfer upheld his objection so the Chairman put the matter to a vote with 7 for the recommendation to enter into a three-year agreement with Hiscox and one against, with this,

Members **RESOLVED** that that the Town Council continues with Hiscox as its main insurer and enters into a binding three-year Long-Term Agreement until 31 March 2024, with a discounted first year's premium of £5,855.75.

58. Freedom of Information Policy

Members noted the Hiscock Freedom of Information Policy as presented and then.

Members **RESOLVED** to re-adopt the Freedom of Information Policy for the Town Council.

59. Urgent Business

None

Meeting closed at 8.25pm