

HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes: **Policy and Finance Committee** held on Monday 29th June 2020

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). Cllr S. Inglesfield

1. **Apologies**
None
2. **Minutes**
The minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee held on 9th March 2020 were taken as read, confirmed as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.
3. **Substitutes**
None
4. **Declarations of Interest**
None.
5. **Payments and receipts and income and expenditure reports for the period 1st January 2020 – 31st March 2020.**
Members had before them the list of payments and receipts and income and expenditure reports for the period **1st January 2020 – 31st March 2020**. The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) welcomed questions with the following being asked by Members;
 - It was asked what the £1,300 credit from AINI Nissan related to. It was explained that it was payment made from the insurers of a driver who drove into the War Memorial area of Muster Green and caused damaged to the railings.
 - CCTV delivery in light of the Town Council's commitment to capital fund and ongoing revenue costs was raised as it was noted that a payment had been made to Mid Sussex District Council. It was noted that the replacement cameras were all it situe at existing sites and the two new cameras for the parks had been procured and the locations had been agreed. The placement was to be actioned by Sussex Police.
 - The payments for Franklands Village lighting was questioned. It was noted that the payment was part of the Town Council's wider upgrade to the street lights it owns across Haywards Heath.

Members then **RESOLVED** to;

Recommend to Full Council the list of payments and receipts, and income and expenditure for the period 1st January 2020 – 31st March 2020.

6. Income and Expenditure Accounts and Balance Sheet – Year Ended 31st March 2020.

Members noted the Income and Expenditure Accounts and Balance Sheet Year Ended 31st March 2020, which the Responsible Finance Officer presented. It was questioned what was included in the amount of £11,600 presented as debtors in the balance sheet. The RFO explained that the debtor's amount was predominately made up of hiring fees from invoices sent out at the end March that had been held up due to Covid-19. This hirers debt made up around £4,600 of the £11,600. It was asked if the hirer's money was recoverable, as these hires may not have been fulfilled due to lock down? It was noted that all those hires were fulfilled and all the monies were pending apart from a major hirer who has been offered a small reduction on their hire fee. It was asked if credit notes would be needed. It was explained that hires are not paid in advance so all those invoiced for would have been honoured so the total owed was correctly presented with the debtor's amount. The Town Clerk then confirmed that the further £7,000 was monies owed by West Sussex County Council for roundabout maintenance. It was then asked if the Town Council was in arrears with regards to VAT reclaims. It was noted that the Town Council was, but it was only the last quarter of the year, which had been submitted. There were no further questions. The Town Clerk then asked Members to note that due the Covid-19 pandemic that not of all the paperwork for the year end was presented as normally expected and required in June. This was on the grounds that the deadline for end of year paperwork had been extended to the 31st August 2020 from the 30th June 2020, so the paperwork would be presented to Full Council in July. This was coupled with a delay in paperwork from the Internal Audit as it had been undertaken remotely, with this,

Members **RESOLVED** to **adopt the Income and Expenditure Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31st March 2020.**

7. Town Council Financial Forecast

The RFO presented a report to demonstrate a forecast on how the Town Council was responding financially due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Focus was put on the fact that the majority of the Town Council's income comes from the annual guaranteed precept, with the biggest revenue loss being the closure of the Town Hall. A worst-case scenario was presented with no hiring income for the current financial year. However, the financial forecast presented, showed that all in year budgeted commitments could be met along with increased budgets to ensure a safe return to the office for staff, and the welcoming of hirers again. It was noted that Council's finances were sound with a general reserve of circa £160,000 so a loss on the projected hirings of circa £40,000 could be met leaving circa £120,000 in reserves. However, it was also noted that there were still budgets that may not necessarily need to be spent if the Town Council was not minded to and the Councils budgets would be very closely monitored. Members were happy with the current financial situation, but were mindful moving into the next financial year, that hires would remain low in the new virtual world and the demographic of Town Hall users may see people/groups not return. More worrying there could be a decrease in the Town Council's precept as more people may have to claim benefits, because of job losses, resulting in the reduction of the average band D levels, as they will be exempt from payment. It was then asked, as the Town Hall was shut, had savings been made on utilities and stationery? The RFO stated that in the grand scheme of things savings will have been made, but not substantial, as officers had been using the Town Hall to maintain services and the Covid-19 response. Members thanked the RFO, and with no further comments.

Members **RESOLVED** to;

- a) **note this report and agree that the assumptions made in it are reasonable;**
- b) **acknowledge the potential impact that a significantly reduced income from lettings will have on the Town Council's overall budget;**
- c) **agree not to amend/reduce any individual budget headings for the time being until a clearer picture emerges as to how the Town Council might be able to achieve its objectives.**

8. Grants

Members were supportive of the one grant presented and commended the work of the Friends of Embark. It was also noted that the organisation was the only grant recipient that had come back to the Town Council to thank the Council for a previous award and demonstrate what they had done with the grant monies previously awarded.

Members **RESOLVED** to;

Award a grant of £440 to Friends of Embark towards the one-off costs of upgrading the website to provide a shop facility, the purchase of a printer for product and postage labelling, and to cover the cost of packaging and stationery.

9. Dame Vera Lynn – Discretionary Donation/Purchase

Members received the report of the Town Clerk and had no hesitation in supporting the suggestion of making a discretionary award to honour the life and work of Dame Vera Lynn. In considering the projects put forward Members agreed to keep within the framework and maximum awards available to organisations/groups. With this the Town Clerk suggested the two of the three projects presented be awarded funding, this was unanimously agreed and then;

Members **RESOLVED** to;

Make a contribution from the grants budget to the Dame Vera Lynn Children's Charity towards roll away linoleum floor matting (£250), messy play sessions, an outdoor park play and their Christmas party for their families – (£400), in commemoration of Dame Vera Lynn passing.

10. General Data Protection Policies

Members considered the policies as presented. It was asked if the consultants who produced the policies had satisfied themselves on the Town Council processes by Audit. It was confirmed by the Town Clerk that this was undertaken at the outset by an office visit by the company. It was noted that it was probably time for a review, but the auditor will only check that the policies in place. A further audit would be looked into, taking into account the social distancing requirements in place. It was then asked if the Town Council's data is backed up and recoverable? The Town Clerk stated that due to a potential hack, and some files being mistakenly deleted, it can be confirmed that data is recoverable, as the two aforementioned instances meant the Town Council's IT provider had to recover data from the hack, and recover the deleted files. This was undertaken by rewinding the server and the restarting it from the time of the incidents. Then only the work undertaken within that day was lost.

Members were encouraged and content with the response from the Town Clerk and then signed off the documents presented;

Members **RESOLVED** to;

Adopt the General Data Protection Regulations Policies for Haywards Heath Town Council and adopt them for the 2020/2021 council year.

11. Urgent Business

One matter was raised by the Chairman which related to the email received by all Members over the previous weekend from Ms Carr, in relation to Black Lives Matters. It was noted that due to the timing of the email it could not legally make the statutory requirements to be placed on the agenda for the meeting so no decision could be made. It was stated that, in agreement with Mayor, the Town Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and Equal Opportunities Statement, last reviewed in January 2019, was being taken to Full Council on the 20th July 2020 for review and Ms Carr could be invited to attend the meeting and make representation so all Councillors could be involved in and participate in such an important debate.

Meeting closed at 8.18pm