

HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes: **Policy and Finance Committee** held on Monday 18th June 2018

Present Cllrs:

J Ash-Edwards (Chairman)
S Wickremaratchi (Vice Chairman)
C Laband
C Ash-Edwards
A Boutrup
R de Mierre
S Hillier
M Pulfer

Apologies ** Absent *

Also Present: Andrew Sturgeon (RFO)

1. Apologies

None

2. Minutes

The minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee held on 16th April 2018 were taken as read, confirmed as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.

3. Substitutes

None

4. Matters Arising

It was asked, in relation to grant awards, whether the Town Council was asking for recognition from recipients. The Town Clerk stated that such a request should be carried within the grant award letter and that he would check with the Community Liaison Officer.

5. Declarations of Interest

None.

6. Payments and receipts and income and expenditure reports for the period 1st March 2018 – 31st March 2018.

Members had before them the list of payments and receipts and income and expenditure reports for the period **1st March 2018 – 31st March 2018**. The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) welcomed questions with the following being asked by Members;

- It was noted that burial income had not been met. It was noted that income was obviously not in the gift of the Town Council. The RFO then stated that if income was low that would be offset against expenditures as fees would not be paid to KPS for grave digging etc. The question was then asked to whether business rates would be reduced if the revenue reduced. The Chairman stated that unfortunately such a mechanism does not exist for any business. The requirement for business rates would only be reviewed when the Cemetery is full and no revenue could be derived from the site.
- Clarification was sought on the overspend of the election budget. It was noted that the Council had agreed, on top of the annual budget, to take the cost of the double Bentswood and Franklands Ward by-election within the 2017-2018 yearly expenditure.
- It was asked why there was an overspend on the vehicle budget. It was explained the additional expenditure was down to the unforeseen cost of a new gear box to the van.

- It was asked if the sponsorship budget for roundabouts was robust as it was not met in 2017/2018. It was noted that Crest Nicholson had ceased sponsoring the Fox Hill roundabout within the 2017/2018 year, which left the year end budget short, but the Town Clerk was confident the 2018/2019 budget for income would be met.
- The gas account underspend was noted and welcomed.
- It was questioned how the credit cards payments were broken down and what they were generally used for. It was noted that the Town Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Assistant to the Clerk all had a card with statements specific to each. The use of the cards were for travel, online payment and incidental payments that may not be covered for by petty cash holdings.

Members then **RESOLVED** to;

Recommend to Full Council the list of payments and receipts, and income and expenditure for the period 1st March 2018 – 31st March 2018.

7. Income and Expenditure Accounts and Balance Sheet – Year Ended 31st March 2018.

Members noted the Income and Expenditure Accounts and Balance Sheet – Year Ended 31st March 2018. The RFO was asked to comment on the make up of creditors. It was noted that the majority were hiring fees which had been invoiced for after the end of the financial year and a number of Section 106 payments from Mid Sussex District Council that had yet to be drawn down

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the **Income and Expenditure Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31st March 2018.**

8. Annual Return for the Year Ended 31st March 2018 – Internal Audit Report

Members noted and welcomed the clean bill of health recorded by the Internal Auditor. It was asked how many years the current Internal Auditor had been with the Town Council. The Town Clerk stated four years. As a result, it was suggested for good order that the position be reviewed within the current year.

Members **RESOLVED** to agree to and note the contents of the Internal Auditor's report.

9. Annual Return for the Year Ended 31st March 2018 – Section 1 Annual Governance Statement

Without comment;

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the **Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31st March 2018 and authorised the Chairman of the Committee to sign.**

10. Annual Return for the Year Ended 31st March 2018 – Section 2 Accounting Statements

Without comment;

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the **Accounting Statements for the year ended 31st March 2018 and authorised the Chairman of the Committee to sign.**

During the considerations on items 6-10 the Responsible Finance Officer was thanked by the Committee for all of his hard work to achieve another successful and accurate set of year end accounts and satisfactory Internal Auditor.

11. Grants

Members considered four grant applications, three of which were approved and one declined. With regards to the application from the Haywards Heath Youth CIC, Mid Sussex Older People's Council CIC and the Kings Church Mid Sussex, Members were happy to support each project. The aforementioned two applications were approved without question and the grant to Kings Church Mid Sussex was made along with the following comment. It was suggested by Officers that such a grant should not be awarded as the Church had a responsibility to raise funds for such purposes. However, Members were of a different opinion and supported the grant application as they felt that however small the Town Council's contribution it could save, with an intervention at an early point of a child's life, the regulative service thousands of pounds in the future. With regards to an application from Mid Sussex Scouts, Members were not satisfied that the trip, which seems to be more recreational than necessary, would benefit the wider group of Scouts and was applied for a minimal number of people. On these grounds the grant was not to support with a show of hands from seven Members of the Committee with one abstention.

Members **RESOLVED** to;

- a) **Award a grant of £250.00 to Haywards Heath Youth CIC towards a day out for young carers.**
- b) **Award a grant of £250 to Mid Sussex Older People's Council towards the running of a telephone messaging service and delivery of quarterly newsletter.**
- c) **Not to award a grant of £500.00 to the Mid Sussex District Scouts towards at trip to America for four Scouts.**
- d) **Award a grant of £250.00 to the Kings Church Mid Sussex towards supporting a Parents and Toddlers Group.**

13. Ward Budget Expenditure and Policy Review

Members of the Committee were presented with all the unspent Ward Budget allocations from over the last four years and the overarching Ward Budget expenditure policy for review. In the first instance the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) explained that the allocations presented were being carried forward year on year, which was not good accounting practice. Members then in turn considered each project taking advice from the Ward Councillor(s) present. To this end, it was established that monies for improvements to Barn Cottage had been completed and Mid Sussex District Council had not asked for any monies to date, as was the same with the seat and picnic bench at Priory Way. It was agreed that the underspend for a project at Forest Field was no longer required and there was no need for any further verge repairs at Fairfield Way. As a result, the aforementioned projects were deemed to finished and/or not required so the monies allocated to each project would be moved to unrestricted reserves. With regard to Real Time in Franklands Ward it was agreed to move the monies to an allocated reserve for good practice due to the fact that a real time delivery plan was being drawn up by West Sussex County Council, which included the use of Northlands Avenue bus stop. With regards to the Ward Expenditure policy itself it was first questioned about the validity of point 4.2 and 4.3 (to report all expenditure to all Councillors to allow challenge. because this had not been undertaken regularly). The Town Clerk conceded that perhaps it ought to have been done but felt that the idea of the expenditure was to fund projects quickly that were bespoke in each Ward in most instances. The Chairman added that the Ward budget allocation for each Ward has reduced from £8,000 per annum to £2,000 so the scrutiny was not

necessarily needed. With this mind Member agreed to remove 4.2 and 4.3 from the policy. It was also agreed on advice from the RFO that the deadline for submission be by the end of February as the norm was for a last-minute panic spend. This was agreed because there is not often a time where a project can not wait from March to April and this would avoid numerous carry overs of monies at year end. The Clerk brought up this issue of not awarding to monies to project that incur ongoing maintenance costs. It was agreed that the running costs for the first year could be incorporated into the initial cost then the ongoing expenditure would have to be built into year on year budgets. This was on the basis that Ward budgets could not pay for substantial capital projects each year that could incur revenue funding. However, it still needed to be considered with each request lodged. With this;

Members **RESOLVED** to **Recommend to Full Council** to;

a) **That the following allocations of Ward Budget monies be returned to general reserves as they are no longer required;**

- a. **Improvements to Barn Cottage (£500).**
- b. **Seat and Bench at Priory Way (£1,222.95).**
- c. **Bike Rack at Warden Park Primary (£350).**
- d. **Left Over 'Forest Fields Improvements (£745.11).**
- e. **Verge Repairs (£396)**

And that the monies for Real Time Information are put into a Town Project reserve until required.

b) **That the following amendments are made to the Ward Budget Expenditure Policy;**

- a. **Section 4.2 and 4.3 be removed from the Policy.**
- b. **Deadline of submission annually be the 28th February.**
- c. **Allow running costs for the first year to be incorporated into project costs.**

13. Financial Risk Policy for the Town Council.

Members considered the tabled policy, which was up for annual review on the advice of the Internal Auditor who had been impressed by the policy and without comment.

Members **RESOLVED** that;

The Town Clerk be given delegated authority is liaison with the Leader of the Town Council to review the Policy.

14. Hospitality Budget Increase

Members considered the report presented on behalf of the Town Mayor which requested a rise in the Town Council's Hospitality Budget. A past Mayor opened debate by sympathising with the request made to increase the amount of monies but stated that he had faced the same problems during his tenure as Mayor and had to make do with money available and still raised monies for his chosen charities. The rest of the Committee had concerns that the budget had been spent so quickly but felt it would show poor financial discipline to simply top the budget up, which could lead to the same happening with other budgets if they were managed by topping up if overspent. It was also felt that this kind of budget would be under the most scrutiny and taking monies from reserves would not be a good use of tax payer's money. At the conclusion of debate the Chairman asked for a show of hands on the matter with the Town Clerk registering a

unanimous vote against the request made, but with the Committee still wishing to make it clear that they supported the Town Mayor in all of his endeavours,

Members **RESOLVED not to raise the Town Council's hospitality budget.**

15. Urgent Business

None

Meeting closed at 9.07pm