

HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes: **Policy and Finance Committee** held on Monday 27th November 2017

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: Town Mayor Cllr J. Knight (ex officio), Cllr M. Jeffers and Andrew Sturgeon (RFO),

Before the meeting formally opened, with the Vice Chairman Cllr S Wickremaratchi in the Chair in the absence of Cllr J Ash-Edwards, Cllr C. Ash-Edwards was nominated and duly seconded to become the Vice Chairman for the evening.

26. Apologies

M. Pulfer – Conflicting Meeting.
J. Ash-Edwards – Conflicting Meeting.

27. Minutes

The minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee held on 18th September 2017 were taken as read, confirmed as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.

28. Substitutes

M. Jeffers for M. Pulfer
It was noted that J. Knight, as ex officio, had full voting rights during the meeting.

29. Matters Arising

Cllr Hillier asked about whether there was a need to register all Councillors with the Information Commissioner Office? It was noted that indeed it needed to be done, but would not apply to Councillors who were also MSDC or WSCC Councillors as they had already been registered. It was then acknowledged that single hatted Members would need to be registered at a cost to the Town Council (7 total).

Cllr Laband asked whether the Town Clerk had found out if other Town/Parish Council's attracted a rateable value. It was confirmed that those approached are subject to such. Cllr Laband asked if the level was the same as the Town Council pays. The Town Clerk stated that this information had not been sought, but he would ascertain the rates for East Grinstead and Burgess Hill in due course.

30. Declarations of Interest

None.

31. Payments and receipts and income and expenditure reports for the period 1st July 2017 – 31st October 2017.

Members had before them the list of payments and receipts and income and expenditure reports for the period 1st July 2017 – 31st October 2017. The following were asked by Members,

- An explanation was sought for the expenditure of £360 to Mrs A P Reilly regarding catering for the Best Kept Garden and Allotment reception. It was noted that there was not Town Council officer support for catering this year so a third party was employed to do so. It was also stated that the exercise to employ a caterer showed the actual cost for the event against relying on the goodwill of staff.
- The payment of £618.74 to S. Mohammad-Khan was questioned. It was noted that due to the swift departure of the member of staff real, time tax requirement meant a one-off payment was required. The process was normally dealt within the resignation period that would take in a normal Town Council Pay Day.
- For clarification it was asked if one of the double payments to St Peter and James Hospice had been returned. It was confirmed that the wrong payment details had been give to the RFO. The first payment was returned and the second went through after the RFO was furnished with correct bank details.
- The payment to the credit card was questioned. It was explained that it was the Town Council credit card, which was paid off in full every month.
- It was asked why budget heading 4520 (Vehicle Expenses) was so overspent. It was noted that where costs were projected, the Town Council van needed a new gear box and the cost did not warrant the purchase of a new van.
- It was also asked why the grounds maintenance budget was nearly spent. Repairs were needed to the ride on mower. Again, the cost did not warrant a replacement. It was also noted that the Groundsman had seen his wish list for equipment met this year.
- It was asked if capital depreciation was shown in the accounts. It was replied that what was presented was not a balance sheet, so no it would not be, nor ever has been shown.
- It was also noted that hiring income against its forecasted target was at 70% already this year, which was very encouraging. Wedding income was sited as one of the reasons for this.
- It was asked what the payment for Society Local Council Clerks training included. It was noted that the payment was for a General Data Protection Regulation Webinar. It was also noted that the Town Council's IT providers South East Business Systems were liaising with the Town Council on the matter.

With no further questions.

Members then **RESOLVED** to;

Recommend to Full Council the list of payments and receipts, and income and expenditure for the period 1st July 2017 – 31st October 2017.

32. Recommendations of the External Auditor

Without comment,

Members **RESOLVED** to recommend to;

Full Council the formal minute noting the report of the external auditor for the year ended 31st March 2017.

33. 2018/2019 Committee Timetable

Members without comment approved the report as presented and the proposed timetable of meetings. It was also felt prudent to leave the start time of all meetings at 7.30pm.

Members **RESOLVED** to;

Adopt the Committee Timetable for the Council year 2018 - 2019.

34. Grants

Members considered three grant applications all of which were for running costs. Before the application was heard the policy of awarding running costs was questioned. Members felt that granting for such was a prudent use of Town Council grant monies. This was on the grounds that the WSCC and MSDC did not offer such funding and running costs funding was very hard to obtain from other funding bodies. It was also felt that small organisations found it very hard to exist, so this kind of unique funding was welcomed. Larger organisations who received, albeit a small contribution in term of their larger District/County wide service costs, a contribution from the Hayward Heath community towards the service they provide. Furthermore, the Council had not spent its total budget for the last two years so there was no concern about monies being used in a more productive way. Generally, all Members of the Committee stated that they felt that revenue funding was something the Town Council should continue and it was refreshing that such a grant was available to worthy groups in the Town and those who serve the Town. It was agreed that in the main these groups relied on volunteers so all monies awarded supported these individuals who work tirelessly for the community. In closing the debate, with the Committee's view that running costs were a suitable use of grant monies for the aforementioned reasons stated, the Town Clerk made it clear that the policy could not have been changed at the meeting nor a new policy be implemented on the grants criteria as the matter of changing the policy was not on the agenda. Therefore, it was asked that the approval of all awards be made as the applications fitted into the Town Councils grants policy and there was no valid reason to turn any of the applications down, with this,

Members **RESOLVED** to award;

- a) **A grant of £250 to 4Sight towards running costs.**
- b) **A grant of £250 to St Catherine's Hospice towards running costs.**
- c) **A grant of £250 to Revitalise Respite Holidays towards running costs.**

35. Update of Grants Awards Made by the Town Council 2016 - 2017

Members welcomed and noted the report acknowledging the importance of awarding monies to local organisations. In noting that the budget had not been spent it was asked if the surplus monies were rolled over into the 2017/2018 budget. The FRO responded by saying that any unspent money is swept into

general reserves and a new budget put in place. The Chairman then also thanked the Community Liaison Officer for her efforts in administering the Town Council's grants scheme.

Members **NOTED** the report.

36. Town Hall, Allotment Rents and Cemetery Fees for 2018/2019

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk and the recommendations within, which had been requested by the Chairman instead of suites of rise possibilities so that the process was focused with a rationale for the rise instead of a bartering process. It was suggested that the percentage rise for commercial hire be 7%. It was decided to remain with the Clerk's recommendation to keep the Town Council charge consistent even though there was a precedent for different percentage rise between Commercial and non-commercial hires in the past. With this in mind,

Members **RESOLVED** that,

As of the 1st April 2018, the following price rises for Council Services are implemented,

(a) To increase cemetery fees for single burials by 5% and double depth by 5%.

(b) To increase hiring charges to users of the Town Hall by 5%.

(c) To increase allotment fees by 5%.

(d) To increase wedding fees to £325.

37 Consideration of a Chequeless/Cashless Town Hall

Initially the notion of becoming a Chequeless/Cashless Town Hall was supported by a Member of the Committee. However, the introduction of the policy was countered by other Committee Members on the grounds that on a morale basis the Town Council should be supporting all groups/organisations and individuals by giving them all the options for how they wish to pay for Town Council services. This was on the grounds that some groups/organisations did not have formal bank accounts and individuals may not have the facility to pay by card or electronically, or indeed wish to. It was noted on an operational basis fees were not charged by Natwest for banking money and cheques, the amount of payments by cheques and cash was far less than that already being paid by bacs and direct debit and when questioned the RFO informed Members that on average five cheques were received per week. With regards to efficiency it was suggested that there would not be a massive improvement as reconciliation of the payments levelled against visits to the bank was about on par. It was indeed suggested that the Town Council by law may be required to take any form of legal tender. That aside the committee Members agreed a compromise that that the Town Council's policy be that payment by card or electronic means be the preferred option but still offer the ability to pay cash or cheques. Members were happy that card payment facilities were to be introduced as an operational matter and under financial implications, it was thought it to be prudent for officers to go for the variable option for Worldpay payments as it was felt that the fixed cost would not be economical with the low forecasted amount of transactions that would be taken. The Clerk then clarified the wording of the agreed policy, which was agreed unanimously and,

Members **RESOLVED** that,

The Town Council's policy of payment for its services is as follows; 'The Town Council's preferred method of payment

for its services is by debit/credit card or electronic payment. Payment by cheque and cash is also accepted.'

38. Close Circuit Television

Members were fully supportive of the recommendation and felt the initiative to replace existing CCTV cameras along with the two-new cameras was long overdue. It was confirmed that the Victoria Park camera had been agreed through the initial process was part of the consultation undertaken back in 2014 and the Clair Park Camera has been an addition since the resurrection of the project.

Members **RESOLVED** to;

Ratify the recommendation of the Environment and General Purposes Committee dated 16th October 2017 and allocate £8,768.85 of un-earmarked as Haywards Heath Town Council's contribution for the replacement of the five existing CCTV cameras in Haywards Heath and the provision of two new cameras to be placed in Victoria Park and Clair Park.

39. Town Council Earmarked Reserve Review

There was agreement that the earmarked budget headings recommended for removal were not required and that there should be a tidying up of the Town Council's reserves. However, there was disagreement between Committee Members on how monies should be administered with some Members supporting the sweeping of the monies into the general reserve and others wishing that the monies be earmarked as a budget that supports the Town whether it be for business or community use. The RFO, on request, explained that the Healthcheck money was awarded over ten years ago by the County Council and was no longer required and the Clerk confirmed that the Neighbourhood money was no longer required. It was strongly felt that the monies needed to be retained and shown to be available for the Town so the Town Council shows its commitment to developing Haywards Heath. It was suggested that the Town Council could allocate monies from its reserve so the need for a budget heading was not a necessity. An agreement could not be reached so to push the debate to a conclusion Cllr Jeffers put forward an amended resolution, which was seconded, as follows;

Amalgamate the pots of earmarked reserves (Environmental Projects (£250), Healthcheck (£1952,03), Economic Development (£1,412.82) and Neighbourhood Plan (£284.30) into an earmarked reserve' entitled 'Town Development'

As there was still disagreement to the revised recommendation a vote was taken on the amended resolution with six Members voting for the amended resolution (Jeffers, Laband, de Meirre, Boutrup, Wickremaratchi and Hillier) and two against (C. Ash-Edwards and Knight), therefore;

Members **RESOLVED** to,

Amalgamate the pots of earmarked reserves (Environmental Projects (£250), Healthcheck (£1952,03), Economic Development (£1,412.82) and Neighbourhood Plan (£284.30) into an earmarked reserve entitled 'Town Development'

40. Urgent Business

For information only and if asked, Members were informed that the electric supply to the Christmas Light Banner between Fat Face and WH Smith had been damaged. UKPN were to attend within 48 hours so the diagnosis of the problem was imminent, but would most likely involve the digging up of the pavement so it was unlikely the banner would be on for the Christmas Light switch on.

Meeting closed at 9pm