

## HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **POLICY, RESOURCES and COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE** virtual meeting held on **Tuesday 28 July 2020 at 2.30 pm**

Attendees: Parish Councillors: Frances Gaudencio (Chair), Frank Rylance, Ian Weir, David Hammond.

Visiting members: None

Clerk: Ian Cumberworth

**PRC20/01 APOLOGIES:** Kate Bailey and Sue Hatton.

**PRC20/02 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS:** None declared.

**PRC20/03 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23rd January 2020 as previously circulated were accepted.

**PRC20/04 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.**

There were no members of the public present.

**PRC20/05 CLERKS REPORT**

**20/05.1 Financial Accounts – Earmarked Reserves** the Clerk introduced a report which set out the projected Earmarked Reserves position post the completion of the play area project in the sum of £84,111.

Members were advised that it may still be possible to allocate some of the savings realised from last year's budget but it was suggested that due to the ongoing uncertainty regarding Covid 19 a prudent approach should be taken.

The Councils income streams are likely to continue to be affected with the ongoing pandemic and in particular if the anticipated second wave materialises.

Members sought confirmation that the balance set out in the summary table reflected the S106 funds to be returned to the Council in respect of the play areas. Clerk confirmed this was the case.

Members duly noted the position statement.

**20/05.2 Hassocks Parish Council – Code of Conduct** Members were advised that the Council was required to periodically review its Code of Conduct which was adopted by the Council in May 2015.

The document set out in the report papers had been amended to align with Mid Sussex District Councils and was originally due to be considered at the earlier Policy Resources & Communications Committee in March at around the time lockdown came into effect, therefore the meeting was required to be cancelled.

The suggested amendments were set out in bold italics in Appendix 2 of the agenda.

Members were requested to note that a new member's code of conduct is being reviewed nationally and is out for consultation at the present time but it is likely to retain a significant number of the existing features within the current code.

Members were therefore requested to consider the proposed amendments to its existing code set out in the attached paper in the first instance.

Some members expressed concerns that it was not the easiest of documents to follow as it was written from a legalistic point of view but the consensus amongst members was that they were happy to accept the proposed amendments. Members **RESOLVED** to **AGREE** the proposed changes set out in the Member Code of Conduct

**20/05.3 Grants Scheme** The Clerk informed members that currently organisations apply for grants annually which were normally considered by Council at its September meeting. Members had previously requested that the Council look at reviewing its current arrangements and explore the option of moving over to a twice yearly grant approach.

This report was initially scheduled to be considered at the Policy Resources & Communications Committee at its March meeting that was cancelled due to the pandemic therefore grants for this year will have to be considered under the existing regime with any changes brought in from next year.

The Councils current conditions of grant are very basic which were set out in Appendix 3 of the agenda.

A suggested approach was set out in Appendix 4 and 5 of the agenda with a view to strengthening the process and aligning applications to support the Councils objectives. Member's views were sought on the proposed approach.

Members welcomed the revised conditions and application form design as they felt the Council should become more active in ensuring that funds were expended in line with the application and in particular the larger grant values and that the objectives were achieved.

Members confirmed that the funding should be linked in supporting the parish's priorities. Members suggested an amendment to the application form relating to the section regarding the number of direct beneficiaries of the proposed project to be replaced with expected demographics of the beneficiaries. Subject to the above amendment members **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the revised grant conditions and application to be introduced for the 2021/22 grant funding round.

**20/05.4 Business Plan** Cllr Gaudencio introduced this item as it was felt that the Policy Resources and Communications Committee should have responsibility for the oversight of the plan and to review progress from time to time and to consider the impact of Covid 19. Members felt that it would be beneficial for the Committee to continue to review the plan from time to time

It was acknowledged that a number of the work streams have continued during the lockdown period. It was concluded that further work will need to be undertaken to revisit some of prioritisation and funding to support some of the initiatives The Clerk indicated that the largest of the current financial phases of the plan are due to be completed with the pending completion of the play area contract.

When reviewing the plan and determining priorities members will need to have regard for funding streams available to deliver the projects.

It was agreed that the plan would be revisited by Cllr Gaudencio, Cllr Weir and the Clerk with a view to coming back to this committee with a further report setting out any proposed amendments to the plan for consideration at a future point.

- 20/05.5    Communication** Cllr Gaudencio introduced this standing item on the agenda and indicated that she was keen to draft an item for publication setting out what the Council has been doing and continue to deliver throughout the lockdown and post lockdown periods.

The Clerk indicated that he will also need to generate an item on the pending opening of the play areas and the need for users to heed the additional guidance to enable the play areas to be reopened incorporating the government guidance. Members discussed the reopening of the play areas and the government guidelines and all were supportive of opening of the new facilities with the additional guidance.

Cllr Gaudencio sought member's views on how they found virtual meetings and the use of Zoom. Members were generally very positive about its use and the way in which the Council had implemented its introduction, some members indicated that the use of virtual meetings had in fact provided greater focus on the content of the meetings. The Clerk indicated that he felt virtual meetings will continue to be needed for the foreseeable future.

- 20/05.6    Email system – migration** the Clerk confirmed that all Councillors have now migrated successfully over to the new email system although some difficulty was encountered by some initially.

Cllr Gaudencio sought member's views as to how they felt the new system was operating. All members present felt that it was good and it was also noted that when accepting virtual meeting invites it would automatically import this information into the calendar.

Some members have set the email system up so that they are notified when new emails arrive whereas others review the account periodically to pick up emails.

- PRC20/06    Urgent Matters.** There were no urgent matters.

- PRC20/07    DATE OF NEXT MEETING.** 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020

- PRC20/08    EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS** In view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted Councillors will be referred to the confidential agenda. If any members of the public or press are present they will be requested to withdraw from the meeting.