

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **POLICY, RESOURCES and COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE** meeting held on **Tuesday 16 October 2018 at 7.30 pm**

Attendees: Parish Councillors: Frances Gaudencio (Chair), Judith Foot, Sue Hatton, Peter Gibbons, Georgia Cheshire and Kate Bailey

Clerk: Ian Cumberworth

PRC18/19 APOLOGIES: Cllr Ian Weir.

PRC18/20 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS: None declared.

PRC18/21 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th July 2018 as previously circulated were accepted.

PRC18/22 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

There were no members of the public present.

PRC18/23 CLERKS REPORT

23.1 Financial Accounts – Budget the Clerk introduced the budget report for the period ending 8th October 2018 which set out summary details for each income/expenditure code. The report detailed the following:

1. Actual year to date
2. Current Annual Budget
3. Variance
4. Funds Available
5. % spent to date
6. Transfer to/from Ear Marked Reserves (EMR)

Members were taken through various figures and invited to ask questions on the attached budget report. The Clerk flagged up a number of expenditure codes where it was anticipated savings would be achieved however he also highlighted that there are likely to be some unbudgeted costs in the near future however sufficient funds would be available to meet these.

Some background explaining the position on the Council's income (revenue) budgets was provided. Members were advised that the income budget position is influenced by the timing of the accounts being raised and the sums falling due. It was anticipated that revenue budgets would be achieved by the end of the financial year. Members were also informed that the Council had just received the second Precept instalment which is the Council primary income source.

The Clerk responded to a range of specific questions from Members who were content with the explanations. The Clerk confirmed that work was just starting on the budget setting for the next financial year (2019/20) and a report will be brought forward to this Committee in November for consideration.

Members thanked the Clerk for producing the report.

23.2 Policy Resources & Communications budget initiatives- Members were invited to consider potential initiatives falling under the responsibility of the Committee for 2019/20. Members discussed a number of options and suggested various areas that could be considered to enhance the Council's ability to communicate more proficiently with residents. In particular it was felt that provision should be made to acquire appropriate software package(s) (such as survey monkey) to facilitate future on-line responses to consultation initiatives. In addition, potentially explore options to improve the transmission of sound within the Council chamber. The Clerk confirmed these proposals would be consistent with the Council priorities and the Business plan and could be considered as part of the budget setting process.

The Clerk confirmed that other Committees will also be asked to consider initiatives for next year however in considering these they should have regard for the existing priorities and the Business Plan.

23.3 Investment Policy –Members were requested to consider the draft Investment Policy (Appendix 2) which set out the proposed governance framework for banking and investments. The intention was that the document would form part of the Council's Standing Orders/Financial Regulations. The basis of the policy is to enable the Council to have a clear statement/transparency on how it intends to manage its finances and will inform future investment decisions.

Members felt that the policy provided transparency and clarity and welcomed the introduction of the policy. Members **RESOLVED** to approve the proposed Investment policy

23.4 Communications – Members took the opportunity to review the various Communication initiatives undertaken during the year which included Parking Consultation/Adastra Park Consultation/Neighbourhood plan information leaflet and various press releases. The consensus was that the communications were compliant with the Communications policy and have been generally well received by the public. Overall the Communications policy framework works effectively with the final sign off resting with the Clerk. Members views was going forward that all press releases and written communications should be in the name of the Clerk.

Some of the initiatives had proved challenging logistically but the Council has gained more experience in this area and is better placed to oversee future initiatives

One area which Members felt could be improved with regard to the consultation initiatives is to have the ability for responses to be submitted electronically on-line with the use of software such as 'survey monkey' This matter had been discussed earlier in the agenda and funding will be proposed to facilitate the acquisition of appropriate software.

Members discussed the issues previously raised in relation to the transmission of sound within the Chamber that had been raised by a member of the public. The member of public had subsequently submitted a number of practical solutions at the request of the Council that could be considered in the first instance and signposted the Council to other sources of advice if electronic solutions were to be explored. Some of the suggested practical solutions were discussed by Members who felt some of them could be actioned relatively easily therefore requested the Clerk to circulate some further guidance to members regarding protocols at meetings. The onus would also be on the Chairs being more proactive in managing the meetings.

An update was provided on the Business Plan and a first draft of the finished document was circulated at the meeting for Members to view and comment on. Members were pleased with the style/format of the document but suggested a number of minor amendments, Members were also requested to supply the 'office' with any photos of the high street so that they could be incorporated into the document.

The Clerk undertook to make the changes and circulate a revised version to Members of this Committee for further comment prior to issue to the wider membership. It was agreed that once the document had been finalised it would be circulated to all Members and various voluntary sector groups/organisations and uploaded onto the Councils website.

- 23.5 Parish Annual Meeting Business** – Members considered whether they wished to overhaul the current format of the Annual Parish meeting to try to encourage greater engagement with the public. Members discussed a number of potential options as to how the format could be reviewed and they were keen to refresh the current model. Members **RESOLVED** to create a small group of members Cllr Foot, Bailey and Gaudencio to develop suggestions for consideration at a future meeting.

PRC18/24 Urgent Matters at the discretion of the Chair for noting and/or inclusion on a future agenda. None

PRC18/25 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING.** 20 November 2018

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.

CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS

PRC18/26 **STAFFING MATTERS**

- 26.1** Members were updated regarding the current vacancy in the office and were informed that a person specification will be drafted in the near future and an advertisement placed in due course. The process of moving this forward would be the responsibility of the clerk and members of the staffing group. In the interim additional hours are being undertaken by existing staff to support the office. Members were also advised that salary payments are now being made electronically.
- 26.2** WSCC advised the Council that they are required to have an Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP) for pension scheme members. Members were therefore requested to consider a draft policy that was set out in Appendix 4 After careful consideration Members **RESOLVED** to agree the proposed IDRP for county pension scheme members.