

## HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **POLICY, RESOURCES and COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE** meeting held on **Tuesday 20 November 2018 at 7.30 pm**

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

Clerk: Ian Cumberworth

**PRC18/27 APOLOGIES:** none.  
Absent without apologies: Georgia Cheshire

**PRC18/28 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS:** None declared.

### **PRC18/29 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018 as previously circulated were accepted.

### **PRC18/30 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.**

There were no members of the public present.

### **PRC18/31 CLERKS REPORT**

- 31.1** The Clerk introduced the report setting out the Budget Proposal for 2019/20 which was presented on pages 3 – 16.

The report provided Members with the projected financial out turn for 2018/19 and a proposed budget for 2019/20 for consideration. The Clerk set out a number of factors that had been taken into consideration in proposing the budget. The Clerk reaffirmed that the action taken last year by Members to deliver a balanced budget and move away from placing reliance on General Reserves to cover operating costs had re-established the Council on a sound financial footing.

Member's attention was drawn specifically to pages 6 and 7 of the agenda which set out a summary of income and expenditure for 2018/19 (projected out turn) and the proposed budget for 2019/20.

Based on the proposed budget projections for 2019/20 if Members were minded to retain the current level of precept it would deliver a deficit budget of £6,076 which would need to be met from General Reserves.

The Clerk advised Members that if they wished to maintain a balanced budget, based on the current draft figures in this report they would be required to increase the precept by £6,076 which would equate to a 1.70% increase on a band D equivalent property. This calculation has been based on the estimated Property Tax Base of 3382 (Band D equivalent).

Due to savings being realised in the 2017/18 budget and 2018/19 budget there will be an opportunity to allocate some additional funding from general reserves towards earmarked reserves in support of the Council's priorities.

The Clerk went on to say that as part of the budget setting process he has attempted to provide some narrative on some of the key variances in the current budget (18/19) and potential options/initiatives to be considered as

part of the budget proposal for 2019/20 which were set out on page 8 of the agenda.

In addition Members attention was drawn to the effect the budget movements would have on the overall reserves of the Council (page 7 of the agenda) and the current position of Earmarked Reserves (page 10 of agenda) if no additional funds were transferred in this financial year to support the Council's priorities.

Members then entered into detailed discussion considering each element of both the projected out turn in relation to 2018/19 and the proposed budget for 2019/20 and in particular those areas highlighted in the notes set out on pages 8 and 9 of the agenda.

The general consensus from Members was that the proposed variations to existing budgets for 2019/20, and the potential areas of expenditure, appeared to be reasonable and acknowledged the impact of works that would be required in the forthcoming year. Some reservations were raised by Members as to whether sufficient provision was being made for certain expenditure areas, however Members were assured that in this event funds could be made available from General Reserves to make up any under provision. Members therefore indicated they were content with this approach.

The Clerk then took Members through each of the items set out on page 9 which were detailed under the respective Committees: Policy Resources and Communications and Grounds and Environment Committee which had previously identified specific areas Members wished to consider supporting in the forthcoming year. Members were reminded that in considering any proposal they should have regard to the impact on the precept requirement.

With regard to the acquisition of software (such as Survey Monkey) identified by the Policy Resource & Communication Committee, a proposal was being considered elsewhere on this agenda as funds could be made available to support this from this year's budget.

Although no specific budget has been assigned to sound transmission improvements this initiative is currently in progress and has yet to conclude what action if any is required at this stage. If further expenditure is required this will be subject to a separate report once the review has been concluded.

The Clerk then took Members through the areas identified by Grounds & Environment Committee who wished to continue to support Public Footpaths and Traffic Calming Initiatives. The Clerk confirmed that a similar provision has been allowed for in the current financial year and the proposal for 2019/20 of £3,500 and £3,000 respectively.

Members discussed the allocation regarding Traffic Calming and reaffirmed that if additional funding was required over and above the allocated sum this should be realised from section 106 contributions.

Cllr Gibbons indicated that some remedial works were likely to be required in Orchard Lane. After discussion it was agreed that this would be looked at initially this financial year by the Clerk and appropriate funds identified.

Members agreed that Garden of Remembrance improvements should be met from the Earmarked Reserve budget set aside for the Park masterplan.

G & E Members had also indicated that they would like to consider supporting funding of the Repairs & Renewals fund via earmarked reserves. The Clerk

informed Members that as a result of prudent action taken last year by Members to establish a fund of £15,000, it has already been necessary to utilise this to undertake a significant replacement of equipment this year. Members were therefore requested to consider reallocating some of the General Reserves to Earmarked Reserves Repairs and Renewals fund . The Clerk suggested that it should cover the funds utilised this year and a modest additional allocation of £2,500 therefore an additional £7,500 should be allocated to the R & R fund to bring the reserve up to £17,500.

Members then discussed how any additional funds should be allocated over to Earmarked Reserves; after discussions Members felt it appropriate that they would be guided by the Clerk as to the level to be considered to be transferred in principle and that the allocation of the funds to specific initiatives would be considered by the respective Committees in January.

Members then had a detailed debate around the approach to determining the level of precept, all Members felt that in light of the action required last year to set the precept level it has now returned the Council onto a sound financial footing. On this basis Members indicated that it would be prudent to consider a modest rise in the level of precept to build on the approach of delivering a balanced budget. The Clerk confirmed that he would amend the figures to reflect the comments of this Committee to enable Council to see the revised draft budget to enable a specific precept value to be identified to deliver a balanced budget to be presented to Full Council to consider.

Members therefore **RESOLVED** to propose that the Council approve a modest precept increase to enable the Council to deliver a balanced budget.

**RESOLVED** to recommend a sum to be advised by the Clerk to be reallocated from General Reserves into Earmarked Reserves to support the Councils ongoing priorities.

**31.2 Business plan** – awaiting pictures of high street, no further progress has been made due to other priority commitments.

**31.3 Communications/Promotions** - Members were advised that in 2018/19 the council allocated £3,000 to support communication /promotion initiatives. To date this fund has not been fully utilised therefore Members were requested to consider expending some of these funds on the following:

- Survey Monkey (software package)
- Replacement display boards

Both of these items could be used to support future consultation initiatives and would meet the criteria set out to support the Council's emerging Business Plan. Members **RESOLVED** to expend up to £400 (net) to acquire Survey Monkey and up to £300 (net) to acquire replacement display boards which would be funded for the Communications/Promotions budget **110/4065**.

**PRC18/32 Urgent Matters** at the discretion of the Chair for noting and/or inclusion on a future agenda. The Chair Cllr Gaudencio requested that the following items to be considered at future Policy Resource & Communications Committee:

- Community asset Registers.
- Right to bid

- To receive regular updates on any Communications undertaken by the Council between meetings (press releases etc.) to obtain assurance of compliance with the Communications Policy and awareness of the content of communications.

**PRC18/33**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING.** 16 January 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.