

MINUTES of the POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE held in the NEW MILLENNIUM CHAMBER, MANOR HOUSE, CHURCH STREET, LITTLEHAMPTON on MONDAY 17 DECEMBER 2018 at 6.30PM

Present: Cllrs Dr Walsh KStJ (Chair),
Buckland, Chester (Substitute
for Cllr C Blanchard-Cooper)
Gammon and Tandy
(Substitute for Cllr Northeast).

2018/2019

- 47. EVACUATION PROCEDURES**
The evacuation procedures were noted.
- 48. FILMING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS, USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND MOBILE PHONES**
The procedures were noted.
- 49. MOBILE PHONES**
Members and the public were reminded that the use of mobile phones (other than on silent) was prohibited at Town Council and Committee meetings.
- 50. APOLOGIES**
There were apologies from Councillors Baker, C Blanchard-Cooper and Northeast.
- 51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
Members and Officers were reminded to make any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or personal and/or prejudicial interests that they might have in relation to items on the Agenda. The standing declarations were noted. Councillors Buckland, Gammon and Walsh KStJ declared personal interests in matters relating to agenda item 8.4, Members' Allowances Review, as Arun District Councillors. Councillor Walsh KStJ declared a personal interest in matters relating to agenda item 8.1, Health Care provision in Littlehampton, as Vice-Chair of West Sussex County Council's Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee.
- 52. MINUTES**
The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 29th October 2018 (previously circulated) were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

53. CHAIR'S REPORT AND URGENT ITEMS

53.1 Welcome Signs

The Town Clerk updated the Committee on progress with the welcome signs project. He reported that of the three companies that were able to meet the Spring 2019 deadline for producing the new signage, only one met the compliance standards for highways signage. It was noted that this would be achieved by using the services of a consultant engineer. Whilst this would slightly increase the costs, the project remained within budget. Approval was therefore sought for officers to proceed with commissioning further work to deliver the new welcome signs. Members were content with the proposed way forward and it was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to commission the necessary work to meet the Spring 2019 deadline for producing the new welcome signage within the budget allocated to the project.

53.2 Mural

The Committee was asked to consider a proposal to improve the look of the hoardings on the empty retail unit opposite the railway station in Terminus Road by covering it with art work or a mural. The Town Centre Regeneration Officer was working with landlords to address similar issues. It was considered that this proposal could also benefit other empty and undeveloped premises in the Town. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to explore options further with the Town Centre Regeneration Officer.

54. PUBLIC FORUM

There was one member of the public present.

54.1 Mr Ellis addressed the Committee on a number of points. Observing the Committee's interest in addressing the issue of unsightly hoardings around the Town, Mr Ellis highlighted the need for improvement to the shop fronts along the south side of Terminus Road and the site of the former Locomotive public house. Regarding welcome signs, he asked if consideration would still be given to the inclusion of a coastal themed slogan to promote the Town's seaside attractions. He also highlighted the importance of the new signs being in place at the start of the tourist season. Despite the efforts of the various agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour, this continued to be an issue in the Town. Mr Ellis stated that in his view it was time for the Town Council to make stronger representations to Central Government on the need for a strategy to address these problems.

54.2 The Chairman thanked Mr Ellis for his comments which were noted and would be considered at the appropriate time during the meeting. Regarding the issue of unsightly hoardings, it was noted that the local authorities had limited powers to intervene. It was observed that the Town Centre Regeneration Manager was aware of the issue and was working with landlords to encourage improvements. Regarding the welcome signs, it was noted that the timescale for delivering the new signs meant that a decision on whether to include a slogan had been deferred and that there was scope in the final design to add a slogan at a later date.

55. **OFFICER'S REPORTS**

55.1 **Health Care provision in Littlehampton**

55.1.1 The Committee had before it the recent exchange of correspondence with the Department of Health and Social Care (previously circulated). It was noted that the Arun Health Services Advisory Group had recently met and there had been no progress in addressing the disparate need for improvements to primary health care facilities in Littlehampton. The correspondence had also been shared with the District Council at the recent Liaison meeting and the consensus was that the response was very disappointing.

55.1.2 It was clear that the Town Council's original letter had not been seen by the Secretary of State and Members were incredulous that the Department did not consider it was appropriate for Ministers or their officials to intervene. It was also observed that parliamentary protocol dictated that MP's receive replies direct from the appropriate Minister of State. It was therefore considered appropriate that this response be shared with the local MP and that he be requested to send the Town Council's letter again in his name to elicit a more meaningful response. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) **The local MP be requested to send the Town Council's original letter to the Department of Health and Social Care in his name.**
- 2) **The correspondence be otherwise noted.**

55.2 **Communications Strategy Review**

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) regarding the recent review of the Council's Communications Strategy. The review had been agreed as part of the introduction of the strategy in 2017 and it had subsequently been updated to reflect changes in service delivery and the introduction of the new website. Members discussed the frequency of the reviews. Acknowledging that local elections would be held next May, it was judged that reviews would be more meaningful if they were undertaken at the start of the new administration and once every four years thereafter. Acknowledging the growing reliance on social media in communications with residents, it was observed that this needed to be both positive and engaging. Members thanked the

Communications Manager for the excellent report. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) *1) The work that has been implemented as a result of the Strategy as set out in paragraph 3.1.2 of the report be noted.*
- 2) *2) The actions that remain to be implemented as set out in paragraph 3.1.3 of the report be noted.*
- 3) *3) The changes made to the Strategy and additional actions as set out in paragraphs 3.2.1, 3.2.2 to 3.2.4 of the report be noted.*
- 4) *4) The revised Strategy be agreed and RECOMMENDED to Full Council for adoption on 24th January 2019.*
- 5) *5) A further review of the Strategy be initiated by the new Council following the local government elections in May 2019 with reviews every four years thereafter.*

55.3 Council Communications

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which provided an update on the monitoring of the Council's communications. Members were pleased to note encouraging figures throughout the report and were supportive of the plan to use social media more to draw residents' attention to topics that were of interest locally. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The report be noted.

55.4 Members' Allowances Review

The Committee received correspondence from the District Council (previously circulated) which set out their proposals to review the Members' Allowances Scheme. Parish and Town Councils were asked to provide some basic information regarding their individual schemes and invited to comment on what might be considered a reasonable level of Parish Basic Allowance. It was noted that the level of allowance paid to Littlehampton Town Councillors was unchanged since 2015 and equated to approximately 10% of that which was paid to District Councillors. Whilst this level was considered reasonable, it was also noted that the final decision on the allowance paid to Town Councillors would be determined by Full Council once the decision of the District Council's Remuneration Panel had been published. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee's comments be forwarded to the District Council and the update be noted.

55.5 Parishes Joint Letter to Chief Constable and the Police Crime Commissioner

The Committee had before it a request from Rustington Parish Council who wished to make a joint parishes representation to the Chief Constable (CC) and the Police Crime Commissioner (PCC) regarding rising crime and neighbourhood policing in the Eastern Arun District (previously circulated). This was precipitated by a presentation of Neighbourhood Crime Comparison Statistics at the last Joint Eastern Arun Area Committee meeting. Members proceeded to consider a draft of the letter that was it was proposed be sent setting out these concerns and seeking a meeting between the Eastern Arun parishes, the PCC and CC. Members shared the concerns of the neighbouring parishes regarding rising crime and the visibility of local policing and supported sending the letter. The Committee therefore **RESOLVED** that:

The Parishes Joint Letter to Chief Constable and the Police Crime Commissioner be supported.

55.6 Car Parking Enforcement, Wick Parade

The Committee received correspondence regarding the recent introduction of car parking enforcement on Wick Parade (previously circulated). Members welcomed the concession that had been agreed by the landlord to exclude Sundays and the period from 8pm to 8am from the new enforcement regime. It was noted that the new parking regime was being trialed and monitored by the landlord's agent. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

The correspondence be noted.

55.7 Governance Update

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which proposed further changes to the Scheme of Delegation to Committees (the Scheme). The Town Clerk explained that following the recent review of the Town Council's governance documents, it had become apparent that the Scheme in respect of the Governance and Audit Committee required further clarification so that it corresponded with the Town Council's Complaints Procedure. In addition, the Committee was also asked to consider including a representative from minority political groups on the Complaints Panel. Members considered it appropriate that the Panel should reflect the political balance of the Council and make provision for the nomination of a representative from minority groups if appropriate. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

Full Council be RECOMMENDED to:

- 1) Remove the forming of a Complaints Panel from the matters delegated to the Governance and Audit Committee.
- 2) Agree the Complaints Panel procedures as the only way to select a Complaints Panel.
- 3) Include a minority group member on any complaints panel where there is no overall control and that at least two parties are represented on the panel.

55.8 Museum Working Group

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) that set out the work undertaken by the Working Group. It was noted that the report had also been received by the Property and Personnel and Community Resources Committees. Both Committees had approved recommendations within their remit to support the priorities identified by the Working Group regarding the completion of the Museum Collections Documentation Project (CDP). The actions identified also reflected both the scale of the work that would be required to complete the CDP and the resources needed to support the strategic direction of the Museum going forward. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

The resolutions of the Property and Personnel and Community Resources Committees be supported.

55.9 NALC Spring Conference 2019

The Committee noted the arrangements for the NALC Spring conference (previously circulated). Reviewing the conference programme, Members concluded that attendance should only be treated as an approved duty if it was considered beneficial. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

The NALC Spring Conference 2019 programme be noted.

55.10 Council and Committee Dates 2019/20

The Committee received a draft calendar of dates (previously circulated) for the 2019/20 meeting cycle. Should any potential clashes arise, Members were asked to contact the Town Clerk. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

The Draft Council and Committee dates for 2018/19 be RECOMMENDED to Council for approval.

56. FINANCE

56.1 Committee Budget Monitor 2018 – 2019

The Committee considered the periodic finance report (previously circulated) highlighting any significant variances in terms of income and expenditure relating to this Committee's Budget. It was noted that investments were protected under the terms of the UK Banks Financial Services Compensation Scheme. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The report be noted.

56.2 Committee Budget Report 2019 – 2022

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which set out a draft budget for 2019/20 and the projected budgets for 2020/21 and 2021/22. It was noted that overall the proposed budget for the Committee for 2019/20 decreased by 10.81% but that this was mainly due to funding for expenditure on Welcome Signs, Wi-Fi and Public Conveniences being shown as anticipated expenditure in 2018/19. It was noted that the Democratic Representation and Management budget for 2019/20 had been increased to meet the costs of the additional IT licenses that would be required to provide dedicated Town Council email addresses to Councillors as a result of the General Data Protection Regulations. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The draft Committee Budget for 2019/20 and the projected budgets for 2020/21 and 2021/22 be RECOMMENDED to Full Council for approval as part of the overall Council Budget.

56.3 Full Budget Report 2019 – 2022

56.3.1 The Committee received and considered a report which set out a draft Council Budget for 2019/20 and Projected Budgets for 2020/21 and 2021/22 (previously circulated). The projected budgets were predicated on the Council's previous decision to maintain a 1% increase in the precept. It was noted that in future years the Town Council would be relying on its ability to draw on general reserves to maintain this position and support areas of growth. Members thanked the Responsible Financial Officer for the thorough report and proceeded to consider the proposals in more detail. Acknowledging the recommendations from both the Community Resources and Property and Personnel Committees, there was a strong view that a combination of the ambitious project program and growing inflationary pressures might not be sustainable within the proposed 1% increase.

56.3.2 Recognising constraints within the draft budget for 2019/20, coupled with the potential additional burden of the higher tier authorities scaling back discretionary services, it was considered that the Town Council's ability to respond to future challenges could be severely limited. In the current climate of uncertainty, it was also not considered prudent to continue to draw on reserves. Therefore, to provide the flexibility that

might be needed to support the Town Council's future ambitions, such as the Keystone Centre project, it was proposed that Council be recommended to consider increasing the precept by 3% in 2019/20. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) Subject to the changes set out in Minute 56.3 above, the draft Budget for 2019/20 and the projected Budgets for 2020/21, 2021/22 be RECOMMENDED for approval to Full Council.
- 2) Council be recommended to increase the precept by 3% for 2019/20; setting a precept of £1,197,150 for 2019/20.
- 3) Council be recommended to set Band D Council Tax at £121.45 per annum for 2019/20, an increase of 3%, £3.54.

57. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There was none.

The meeting closed at 7:53pm.

CHAIR