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Minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee held on Tuesday 22nd September 2020 at 6.30pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ (Chair)

Councillor Blanchard-Cooper

Councillor Chace

Councillor Long

Councillor Northeast

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Molloy was also in attendance.

2020/2021

This meeting is available to view using the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9NU4zPaJ4M&feature=emb_title

10. Virtual Meeting Protocol and Use of Mobile Devices

The Chair opened the meeting and explained how it would be conducted and the protocol that would be followed, including how any break in the proceedings due to technical difficulties would be managed.

11. Apologies

There were no apologies.

12. 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, and no further declarations were made at this point.

13. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 15th June 2020 (previously circulated) were confirmed as a true record and it was noted that arrangements would be made for these to be formally signed at a later date.

14. Chair's Report and Urgent Items

14.1. Rampion 2 - Community Project Liaison Group Invitation

Notification of the intention to form a Community Project Liaison Group (CPLG) to engage with stakeholders as part of the development process for the Rampion 2 project had been received. The Terms of reference for the Group and membership had yet to be confirmed and it was therefore proposed that the Assistant Town Clerk attend the initial meeting of this group. In view of implications for future planning report to the Planning and Transportation Committee and should a formal decision be required on the Town Council's representation on this Group in the future, proposals would be made to Full Council for approval. It was **Resolved** that:

The Assistant Town Clerk attend the initial meeting of the CPLG and that updates be reported to the Planning and Transportation Committee.

15. Public Forum

- 15.1. In accordance with the Remote Meetings Protocol introduced by the Town Council, members of the public who wished to address the Council or any of its Committees during a remote meeting should have emailed their representations one clear working day before the meeting. There were two representations regarding the Rosemead Play Area Refurbishment project.

Councillor Turner stated:

- 15.2. Sensory paths need not be expensive. They can provide soothing and mood changing effects that assist the children with touch, smell and texture in a safe environment and play a positive role in the development of those with Special Needs. It is a colourful, playful, and creative way for all children, special needs, mental health issues and those with complex learning and behavioural needs to feel totally inclusive. In many ways a sensory path is more effective in helping special needs and disabled children than other sensory type equipment as it encourages movement as well as benefitting mental health. Let me put this to you. Every Special Needs school, as well as many mainstream schools all have a sensory path. Why is it then, that Littlehampton Town Council have not included such an important provision in the plan for Rosemead Park.

Councillors received a letter from Lloyd, a child with autism, requesting more special needs and sensory equipment be provided in parks.

Provision for special needs / disabilities in general is wholly inadequate everywhere, Littlehampton is no different.

This was an opportunity for the town council to pave the way.

Please reconsider and include a sensory path in the plan for Rosemead Park

Response:

- 15.3. The Chair thanked Councillor Turner for her representation regarding the new play area at Rosemead Park. If she recalled, following the discussion of this aspect of the scheme, it was agreed that Officers would go back to the contractor and get costed options for a sensory pathway. This would be reported to the next meeting of that Committee

Councillor Price stated:

- 15.4. This is something I am very passionate about since having communication with a local resident asking for "Play equipment to be assessable to everyone no matter their needs" so I have followed the processes in place and attended meetings (where I could) regarding this.

Unfortunately, I couldn't attend the tender meeting for Rosemead as it was in the daytime, however after communications with councillors that were on the committee and attended the meeting, they agreed on Sutcliffe Play with a clause expressing their wishes for a sensory path and an accessible ladybird. My concerns are that now, this has to go through Policy & Finance to approve and I really don't think that process was explained. From my understanding it was agreed at the Rosemead meeting that the sensory path and ladybird would be included, not that they could "try" and get it with approval through a committee.

I'm not sure why this has been signed off without the whole committee being advised that the sensory path was a "If we can"

I would like to put in writing that the committee agreed on having a sensory path and ladybird (or were under the impression they had) so Rosemead park was assessable to everyone. Without this the park would probably only have approx. 7-10% of assessable equipment to users with disabilities which in my opinion is unacceptable.

Response:

- 15.5. The Chair thanked Councillor Price for her representation regarding the decisions about the new play area at Rosemead Park. During the discussion by Members at the Community Resources meeting in July, decisions were made to incorporate a standalone basketball wall, larger trampoline, and more inclusive and sensory equipment. It was also agreed that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Vice Chair of that Committee to take the action to progress the project. Following discussions with the contractor, the sensory pathway was not progressed. This aspect of the scheme was discussed again by the Community Resources Committee at their meeting on 10th September and it was agreed that Officers would go back to the contractor and get costed options for a sensory pathway. This will be reported to the next meeting of that Committee.

16. Officer's Reports

16.1. COVID 19 Report

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which updated Members on the actions taken in response to the coronavirus pandemic. It was noted that the Town Councils Reception had re-opened the previous day and that virtual meetings would continue until at least the end of the year. Members thanked staff for their hard work in maintaining services throughout the pandemic. Reflecting on the national situation and the rapidly approaching end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Members were very concerned about the long-term effects of the pandemic and the loss of this much needed support. Observing that the hardship and uncertainty experienced by many residents could continue for some time, there was a strong view that the Government should continue to provide support whilst the uncertainties surrounding the impact of the pandemic continued. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. A letter be sent to the local MP urging him to support the continuation of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and other Government initiatives aimed at protecting jobs during the pandemic.**
- 2. The purchase of a licence to continue with Microsoft Office Teams Live Events be agreed.**
- 3. The actions taken during the lockdown be endorsed, and where appropriate, the likely financial consequences be noted.**

16.2. Town Council Priorities

Councillor Walsh KStJ declared a personal interest in the following matter as the Leader of Arun District Council.

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which set out progress on the Council Priorities. The progress with key projects to replace the play equipment at Rosemead and provide a new Youth Centre in Wick was welcomed. It was observed that Council would be considering a recommendation to proceed with the disposal of the Project 82 Building in Wick. Members commented that it might be helpful for Council to be aware of the costs of all options, such as an estimate of the work that would be required to bring the building back into use and the potential for housing. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. The comments of this Committee regarding the Project 82 building in Wick be incorporated in the report on this matter to Council.**
- 2. Progress with the Town Council's Priorities be noted.**

16.3. Town Centre Events

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) and update on the jointly funded Town Centre events initiatives. This included proposals to develop an augmented reality mobile device application (app.) The "Love Local" initiative had been well received and demonstrated how advances in technology could be used to encourage visitors. Members were keen to embrace the new technologies of augmented reality apps and wished to have a better understanding of the effectiveness of this technology and how it had been used elsewhere. It was agreed that comparisons be researched as part of this work and it was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. The progress made on phases 1 through to 3 of the Town Centre events initiative be noted.**
- 2. The research into the augmented reality app. continue as set out in Minute 16.3 above.**
- 3. The contents of the report be otherwise noted.**

Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ left the meeting at 7:01pm due to technical difficulties and Councillor Long took the Chair for the following item.

Councillor Blanchard-Cooper declared a personal interest in the following matter as Chair of the District Council's Licensing Committee.

16.4. Littlehampton Friday Market

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which sought Members views on the District Council's proposals for the future siting of the weekly Friday Market. At the request of the market operator the market had been moved back to the High Street from its temporary location in St Martins car park where it had been operating since the easing of social distancing restrictions in the summer. The number of stalls was being increased in a stepped approach and it was noted that this was being closely monitored by Licensing Officers who were assessing whether more stalls could be safely be reintroduced on a weekly basis.

Members proceeded to discuss the short-term arrangements for the market in light of COVID-19 and how these might be transferred into more permanent arrangements that would also benefit the Town Centre. Reservations were

expressed about the return of the market to the High Street especially while social distancing restrictions continued. It was considered that the options needed to be carefully thought through in terms of location, shelter, and promotion. Members wished to see the market continue and suggested that it would benefit from being under cover. There was also support for using one of the Town Centre car parks as they would provide the space required to implement social distancing more effectively. Acknowledging the concerns of market traders around viability, Members also emphasised the importance that any changes be publicised prominently and well in advance of them being implemented. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

A representation be made to the District Council setting out the Committee's views on the relocation of the market both in the short term to address COVID-19 concerns and for after the introduction of the new public realm through Liaison meetings and the Town Centre Plan.

Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ re-joined the meeting at 7:04pm and continued to Chair the meeting.

16.5. Website Accessibility

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which set out new regulations that had been put in place which meant that every public sector website and app would need to meet certain accessibility standards. The Deputy Town Clerk briefly outlined the new regulations and the steps that were being taken to ensure the Town Council complied. Published material had been evaluated by staff and the website developer and a number of issues identified had already been rectified.

It had however become apparent that it would not be possible to correct all the issues. In this respect the Regulations stated that provided an organisation had carried out a Disproportionate Burden Assessment in respect of this material, it could be excluded. It was observed that the Council generally received very few requests for assistance in accessing material published on its website. The Committee therefore judged it reasonable that the work to convert the information published on its website be backdated to the beginning of the current Council, May 2019. It was also noted that training would be provided for Officers on the specifics of this to ensure that published material met the regulations going forward. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

1. The results of the Website Accessibility Audit be noted.

2. **The Disproportionate Burden Assessment be approved.**
3. **The work required meet the Regulations on website accessibility be noted.**
4. **The Website Accessibility Statement be approved on an interim basis and it be RECOMMENDED to Full Council for approval on 15 October 2020.**

16.6. Surrey and Sussex (SSALC) and West Sussex Association of Local Councils (WSALC) Reviews

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which updated Members on a strategy review by SSALC and an internal review being undertaken by WSALC. Whilst the strategy review by SSALC was welcomed, the WSALC review was unprompted and did not appear to be very well coordinated. The implications of the reviews could be far reaching but this was not a priority for the Town Council. It was therefore considered prudent that steps be taken to ensure the Town Council had the flexibility to decide its future engagement with these organisations and **Resolved** that:

1. **Council be RECOMMENDED (through the Urgent Action procedure), in consultation with the Mayor, that the Town Council submits its' intention to leave WSALC/SSALC/NALC on 31st March 2021 but reserves the right to withdraw this should the situation so dictate.**
2. **A further report be presented to either the October or December meeting of the Committee.**

16.7. Monitoring Officer Update

The Committee received an update (previously circulated) on the temporary Monitoring Officer arrangements put in place by the District Council. It was **Resolved** that:

The update be noted.

16.8. New Youth Centre in Wick (Tenure)

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which set out a proposal regarding the tenure of the new Centre to replace the Keystone Centre in Wick. The District Council was working in partnership with the Town Council on certain aspects of the scheme and would be providing land opposite the existing Centre in Eldon Way for the new building. This would be through a full repairing lease at a peppercorn rent, proposed for a term of 50 years. This proposal was considered to reflect the design-life of the building and it was therefore **Resolved** that:

Council be RECOMMENDED to enter into a full repairing, insuring lease with Arun District Council for the footprint of the site of the new youth centre in Eldon Way, Wick at a peppercorn rent for a period 50 years.

17. Finance

17.1. Amendments to the Financial Regulations

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which set out proposed amendments to the Financial Regulations and Procurement Policy. This was prompted by the issue of revised model regulations by the National Association of Local Councils and also reflected the Town Council's change to electronic banking. It was noted that the changes had also been reviewed by the Governance and Audit Committee and the online banking procedures subjected to a controlled test to ensure they worked. It was **Resolved** that:

The revised Regulations be RECOMMENDED to Full Council for approval.

17.2. Committee Budget Report

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which highlighted variances from budget in the areas in the remit of the committee. These largely related to the organisation adapting to the new ways of working in response to the COVID 19 pandemic. The report also sought approval to renew the Town Council's insurance with the existing provider following a review and obtaining quotations which was supported. The impact of the pandemic on the Council's overall finances particularly income, at present was balanced by the cancellation of the summer events programme. It was now considered extremely likely that this would significantly affect next year's budget. It was **Resolved** that:

1. The Town Councils Policy with its existing Insurer be renewed on a three-year long-term agreement.

2. The report be otherwise noted.

18. Exempt Business

It was **Resolved** that:

The public and accredited representatives of the press be excluded from the Meeting under Section 100 Local Government Act 1972 due to the confidential nature of the business to be conducted.

The following items are confidential for Members of the Council only in accordance with Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, being information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person).

19. Littlehampton Ferry- Non-Exempt Minute

- 19.1. The Littlehampton Ferry had not operated at all this season due to the restrictions imposed by the Government as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Company had written to the Town Council advising that a bid for a Discretionary Grant from ADC had been approved however, this did not cover the costs incurred by the Company in maintaining the Ferry. The costs related to charges for storage maintenance and preparations for running the service although it was understood that if it operated at all this year (e.g. small groups as dictated by the current restrictions) it would be at a highly reduced level and would need further support to ensure it would be able to operate next year. The Company had asked if the Council wished to see the ferry operate next year and if so, requested that £5,000 of the Service Level Agreement be allocated towards the upkeep of the vessel.
- 19.2. The Town Council had supported the ferry over many years and earlier in the year the Committee had agreed to secure the mooring for the ferry in the hope that the service could resume with the easing of restrictions. This meant that a berth would be available for the start of next year's season and it was observed could be used by the Company should it be in a position to run commercially later in the year. It was also noted that the District Council's Grant was supported by Government funding which had been passported to local authorities. This funding was not however available to parish councils. Although sad that the service may no longer be viable, Members did not consider it would be appropriate in the current situation to accede to this request. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

The Ferry Company's request be declined.

The meeting closed at 8:02pm.

CHAIR