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Minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee held on Monday 15th June 2020 at 6.30pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ (Chair)

Councillor Chace

Councillor Long

Councillor Tandy (attended as a substitute for Cllr Northeast)

Councillor Rhodes

2020/2021

This meeting is available to view using the following link:

<https://youtu.be/ghU3X4vb-Jw>

1. 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.

2. Apologies

There were apologies from Councillors Blanchard-Cooper and Northeast with Councillor Tandy acting as substitute.

3. 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.

4. Minutes

The Minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on Monday 9th March 2020 and the Extraordinary meeting held on Tuesday 12th May 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.

5. Chair's Report and Urgent Items

There were none.

6. Public Forum

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 none.

17 Officer's Reports

7.1. Impact of COVID19

7.1.1 Members received a report (previously circulated) which identified the action taken in response to the coronavirus pandemic health emergency and highlighted the service implications and potential financial consequences as they related to the remit of the Committee. The report also set out matters that had been considered by the other service Committees and the Town Clerk explained that a composite report would be presented to Full Council on 25th June. He proceeded to highlight the following points.

7.1.2 Communications and Remote Meetings

The Town Clerk reported that apart from a few technical issues, remote meetings were going well. The purchase of laptops for all Councillors under the Urgent Action Procedure had provided consistent, stable, and secure access to the Council's preferred remote meetings platform which may need to continue for some time. The Town Council's electronic communications, particularly the Progress E Newsletter had also been well received. Regarding the Progress Newsletter, the Editorial Board was meeting later in the week to discuss the Autumn edition. The printed publication had been suspended during lockdown and replaced by the E Newsletter. The printing contract was due to expire once the Autumn edition was produced and to provide continuity approval was sought, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee and Editorial Board, to extend this contract until next Summer. Members supported this course of action.

7.1.3 High Street Reopening

Following weeks of enforced closure, Town Centre businesses had gradually started to reopen. The Town Council's Amenity Team had been working alongside the District Council installing signage in the High Street to reinforce the social distancing message. It was noted that businesses were

responsible for setting up and monitoring queuing arrangements outside their premises and that the Town Centre Regeneration Officer was supporting them to reopen safely. The Town Centre also now had a temporary dedicated Community Warden whose primary function was to help visitors work their way round the new measures. The town centre markets were being relocated to the large carparks in St Martin's and the Manor House as a temporary measure to make social distancing easier to observe. The Town Council would continue to work closely with the District Council providing support and coordinating publicity to promote the social distancing message and that the Town Centre was once again open for business.

7.1.4 The Littlehampton Ferry Service

The Service had been unable to start operating this season due to the restrictions in place on leisure passenger ferry operations. The Service could not restart until directed and in the meantime, the annual lease on the Pier Road mooring would expire at the end of June. Even if restrictions were not lifted sufficiently to allow the Service to resume, it was essential that the mooring was available at the start of next season. It was therefore recommended that the Town Council secure the mooring and renew the lease agreement with the Harbour Board This was considered sensible and it was noted that officers were in discussion with the Operator regarding options for the service.

7.1.5 Investment Income

It was noted that interest rates had reduced significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst the situation was manageable at present if it continued, it would have a considerable impact on upon the Council's ability to meet its income target this year. The Town Council's buildings remained closed to hirers, reducing income further. The Town Clerk would clarify the assistance received for the Southfields Jubilee Centre as the building was classified as a recreation and leisure premises. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee and the Editorial Board to extend the printing contract.**
- 2. The Urgent Action decision regarding the purchase of laptops be noted.**
- 3. The potential need to continue with Remote Meetings until December be noted.**
- 4. The mooring for the ferry Service be secured for 2020/21.**
- 5. The actions taken during the lockdown be endorsed and where appropriate, the financial consequences be noted.**
- 6. The current position regarding the Town Council's Services be noted, that monitoring**

continues and a report on the way forward be brought back to the Committee for consideration in September.

- 7. The composite report be endorsed and forwarded to Full Council.**
- 8. The contents of the report be otherwise noted.**

7.2. Littlehampton Health Services Update

The Committee received an update (previously circulated) on the Littlehampton One Public Estate (OPE) Project. Recalling the history of neglect and failure to deliver improvements to primary health care facilities for the town, the Committee was angry that the OPE Project had been removed from the County Council's Capital Programme. Whilst this was acknowledged as a pragmatic decision by the County Council, Members strongly criticised the NHS, who owned the majority of the land, for their inability to realise this project. The situation was considered detrimental to the wellbeing of residents and the lack of facilities viewed as a huge disincentive to growth. Members were extremely frustrated at the complete lack of understanding of the urgent need for improvements to primary health care facilities in Littlehampton which was exemplified by the lack of the long overdue replacement of the Pepperville House facility. It was considered that the best way to get this matter prioritised was to ask the Government to intervene directly with the CCG and take action. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

A letter be sent to the Local MP and through him, to the Secretary of State for Health, drawing his attention to the latest setback in this project and asking him to intervene to improve the wellbeing of the residents of the Town, hopefully through a meeting with the relevant Minister, which selected Members from all three tiers of local authorities could attend.

7.3. Town Centre Events

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which set out a proposed strategy to deliver a jointly funded Town Centre events initiative with the District Council. The Town Clerk explained that a three-phase approach was planned to provide initial support as the High Street began reopening leading into a second phase as restrictions on public gatherings were eased, probably around the festive period. The final phase would see high impact and established events to boost visitor numbers. These phases were planned around the proposed improvements to the Town Centre Public Realm and

would also utilise resources in the District Council Arun Inspires Project (AIP). This was a culture and arts initiative that would engage with local artists with aim of delivering high impact events. Work was already underway on initiatives to support the recent reopening of the Town Centre as explained earlier in the meeting and Members were asked to support this strategy going forward. The Committee were supportive of the phased programme and wished to ensure that local groups such as LOCA were engaged in this work where appropriate. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. The three-phase strategy for the Town Centre Events as set out in the report be approved.**
- 2. Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to progress phases 1 and 2 (in conjunction with the District Council)**
- 3. A report updating Members and setting out proposals for the major Phase 3 elements be brought back to Committee in the Autumn.**

7.4 Community Wardens

The Town Clerk updated Members on progress with establishing a Community Warden Scheme to combat antisocial behaviour and provide a wider service to the community. A pilot scheme, deploying two junior and one senior post over 18 months was proposed. Although shorter than the original scheme of 24 months, this would enable a speedier review of the effectiveness of the scheme that would help shape future provision. It was envisaged that this would begin in 2021 and the Town Clerk sought delegated authority to progress the scheme in this way. This was supported and it was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. The update be noted, and authority be delegated the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee to progress this project.**
- 2. The Committee receives regular report on progress with implementing the scheme.**

7.5. Town Centre Re-Opening

It was noted that this item was covered in an earlier discussion as set out in Minute 7.1.3 above.

7.6 Annual Town Meeting and Merit Awards 2020

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which set out proposals defer the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) and set a new date for 2020 as it was unlikely that mass public gatherings would be permissible in the near future. This also affected the Merit Awards which were presented at the Meeting. Members were supportive of deferring the ATM and acknowledging that all elections had been postponed until May 2021, considered it prudent that the new date be set as early in 2021 as the regulations allowed to avoid any clash with the election purdah period. It was noted that nominations for merit awards would also be reopened later in the year giving an opportunity to recognise the work of local groups and individuals during the pandemic. It was therefore **Resolved** that Council be **RECOMMENDED** to agree that:

- 1. The Annual Town Meeting not be held in 2020 and that the 2021 event be brought forward to a date in early March 2021.**
- 2. The Town Merit Awards be put back to March 2021 and that a further round of nominations be sought before then.**

8. Finance

8.1 Committee Budget Monitor

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which highlighted any significant variances from budget in Income and Expenditure relating to this Committees budget. Members wished to thank the Finance Team for preparing the financial updates and the ongoing monitoring in the current climate. It was **Resolved** that:

The report be noted.

9. Exempt Business

There was none.

The meeting closed at 7:19pm.

CHAIR