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Minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee held on Monday 21st December 2020 at 7.10pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ (Chair)

Councillor Blanchard-Cooper

Councillor Chace

Councillor Long

*Councillor Rhodes

Councillor Tandy

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=cGNbSq2QHdI>

28. 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.

29. Apologies

There were apologies from Councillor Northeast and Councillor Tandy attended as substitute.

*Councillor Rhodes joined the meeting at 7:14pm.

30. 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.

31. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26th October 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.

32. Chair's Report and Urgent Items

32.1. Littlehampton Harbour Board - Advisory Body Request

Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ declared a personal interest in the following matter as a Member of the Littlehampton Harbour Board.

The Littlehampton Harbour Board were forming an Advisory Body and had invited the Town Council to nominate a representative. The Advisory Body would involve stakeholders in the Harbour and the Town Council's representation would be agreed by Council. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

The update be noted, and the Terms of Reference be circulated to Members seeking expressions of interest in the role for consideration by Full Council.

33. Public Forum

33.1. 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:

33.2. Ms Knight asked:

I am writing to express my opinion on the meeting regarding the £90, 000 proposed to spend. Can this not be spent wisely on more police patrol or with a security company that have the authority to cuff shoplifters like in some other towns?

My understanding is that the community wardens have NO authority to even make a cyclist dismount? I have seen myself the abuse these wardens take from some of "Littlehampton's scumbags" regarding the no alcohol zones is this really fair on either the wardens (who are only doing their job) or the citizens wanting to feel safe? I feel that as a resident of the town for 52 years I have the right to my opinion and to be listened to.

33.3. Response:

The Chair thanked Ms Knight for bringing her views before the Committee and was sure that Members would consider these when discussing this scheme. As a point of clarification, the Community Wardens were not the existing Business Wardens provided through a partnership of the Co-op and Sussex Police. These were new posts whose role would be to work with the

community across Littlehampton to address anti-social behaviour and criminality, wherever it was identified by people and organisations across the Town. The issues raised would be some of the immediate priorities for the Wardens.

33.4. Mr McKenzie asked:

Comments had been received from Mr McKenzie which has been summarised below in view of the length with the full comments being circulated to Members of the Committee.

I write to express my support for the community warden's initiative which is being discussed at the Policy & Finance Committee. It is a great pity that one of my ward councillors, Councillor Molloy, is actively opposing this on Facebook already and stating that the people she has spoken to say it is not working. I would be interested to know from Councillor Molloy how many people she has spoken to and how people have determined it isn't working and on what basis they are measuring this.

I think that this is a super initiative which is certainly worth trying to see whether it can have an impact on the current dire situation in and around the town. As a resident of Queen Street, I would love to see something effective to try to tackle the behaviours and problems in the town and I urge you all to support this initiative.

I believe the success of this will hang off a few things one of which will be that the town council will need to manage this well. Please ensure that the staff appointed to the roles have the skills and experience needed and that their management is proactive. They themselves will need to be robust and proactive. I also think it critical to consider how progress and success / failure is going to be measured?

Mr McKenzie goes on to ask a range of important related questions that would be answered in an e-mail following the meeting. He ends by saying "Please support this expenditure.

33.5. Response:

The Chair thanked Mr McKenzie for his comments, which he was sure Members would bear in mind when the matter was considered. The concerns that Mr McKenzie raised were the very reason why the scheme was being trialled. The breadth of coverage would allow focus to be directed at many parts of the Town where there were issues of concern. Queen Street was a good example of this, and they were hopeful that by listening to all of the communities across the Town positive results could be achieved. Properly skilled staff able to interact with a wide range of agencies, community groups and individuals would be vital, together with clear direction. As stated earlier, the Town Clerk would respond on Mr McKenzie's points of detail separately in an e-mail following the meeting.

34. Officer's Reports

34.1. Town Centre Events Initiatives

- 34.1.1. The Committee received a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the roll out of Phase one and sought direction from the Committee as to how to proceed with the next phases. If agreed, phase two could see the introduction of art wall murals, a Town Map, the Augmented Reality (AR) App, and street entertainment using the Love Local Arts initiative. Having reviewed the research relating to the map, wall art and AR App, and taking into consideration the Council's experience of the 3D artwork, Members considered it prudent to pause rolling out these aspects of the scheme.
- 34.1.2. The Committee proceeded to consider the Love Local Arts "Dragons Den" proposal. The Town Clerk outlined the format and explained that the initiative aimed to attract high quality family friendly entertainment acts that would encourage visitors to the Town. It was noted that if successful, the acts could extend to Pier Road, forming a link to the seafront. It was also expected that a special event would be held to mark the reopening of the High Street once the Public Realm improvements were complete.
- 34.1.3 Members were supportive of the initiative and the platform it could provide to showcase local talent. It was observed that a panel including Councillors from both the Town and District Council was to be formed to decide the acts to use. Overseeing the effectiveness of the initiative would fall within the remit of the Community Resources Committee. Members wished to ensure that the Panel had some experience in these matters and that the Councillor representatives were drawn from the Ward. It was agreed that representation be further explored, and a recommendation be made to Council. It was therefore **Resolved** that:
- 1. The update on Phase one be noted.**
 - 2. Further work on the Arts Walls and Town Map and Augmented Reality App proposals be deferred to a later date.**
 - 3. The Love Local Arts "Dragons Den" initiative be approved, and expressions of interest be sought for the Town Council's representative on the Panel and a recommendation regarding representation be presented to the March 2021 Full Council meeting.**
 - 4. The contents of the report be otherwise noted.**

34.2. Public Realm

It was reported that a preferred Contractor had been appointed. An announcement would be made by the District Council in due course and the details circulated to all Members. It was **Resolved** that:

The update be noted.

34.3. Community Wardens

34.3.1 The Committee had before it a briefing note (previously circulated) describing the pilot project. The Town Clerk explained the scope of the project and provided clarification regarding the powers and remit of the Wardens. It was noted that the Community Wardens would not have the same powers as a warranted police officer. Their work would be focussed on developing relationships with a wide range of stakeholders in the High Street and wider community with the aim of building local resilience and a sense of safety. The scheme therefore aimed to compliment the work of the police in controlling behaviour in parts of the parish identified as needing support, gathering intelligence, and enforcing the rules of Public Spaces Protection Orders. The Wardens would be employed by Arun District Council and receive training and support through the Safer Arun Partnership who, together with the District Council were partners in the scheme.

34.3.2 The Committee considered communication and developing effective partnerships in the community were paramount if the pilot were to succeed. In addition, Members considered it important that the Wardens were both visible and “badged” as a Town Council partnership initiative and have uniforms including the Town Council’s logo. Members also wished to see the Town Council’s social media deployed including the use of video logs and the Progress Newsletter to publicise the scheme and to have bi-monthly reports on progress. This was a fixed term pilot project and if successful it was hoped that it could be expanded through buy in from neighbouring parishes. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

The Project briefing and update be noted.

34.4. West Sussex Association of Local Councils (WSALC)

The Town Clerk reported that to date the Sussex Association of Local Councils had been unable to hold its AGM. Consequently, the changes that WSALC were looking to progress had stalled and there were moves to convene an extraordinary meeting of the Arun District Association of Local Councils (ADALC). If it proceeded, the ADALC meeting would be considering a proposal to instruct delegates to oppose the WSALC review. Although not currently a participant in the ADALC forum it was considered prudent that the Council join the forum and support the effort to halt the WSALC review. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. A letter be sent to the Arun District Association of Local Councils asking that the Town Council be admitted to the forum.**
- 2. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor be nominated as the Town Council's representatives on ADALC.**
- 3. The update be otherwise noted.**

34.5. Communications Report

The Committee considered a report (previously circulated) that gave an overview of the Council's communications over the last 12 months, including Facebook, the website and the eProgress newsletter. The Committee commended the Communications Team for their work in managing the Council's social media and online communications during the pandemic. Members wished to build on this work and agreed that a review of the communications strategy should include exploring ways to further promote the eProgress newsletter and links to other Social Media platforms such as Instagram to increase public engagement. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

The report and Committee's comments be noted.

34.6. COVID-19 19 Update

The Committee considered a report (previously circulated) which set out the action taken to date in response to the coronavirus pandemic and highlighted service implications and potential financial consequences. The comprehensive report reflected the ongoing work to ensure the continuation of delivery of the Town Council's services. Members were pleased to note that the project to replace the play equipment at Rosemead Park had been completed and the Park re-opened. The reported increase in COVID 19 cases in the District was however concerning and the Committee encouraged everyone to heed the public health message and take all necessary precautions to prevent the spread of the virus. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. The actions taken during the lockdown be endorsed and where appropriate, the likely financial consequences be noted.**
- 2. The contents of the report be otherwise noted.**

34.7. Committee Meeting Dates 2021 and 2022

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which set out proposed changes to the Committee meeting schedule in 2021, including the Annual Town Meeting and Merit Awards 2021 as well as a draft calendar for 2022 for consideration. The 2021 schedule had been changed to allow for the elections that had been postponed in 2020 to be held including the by-elections in the Wickbourne and Beach Wards. It was also proposed that the Annual Town Meeting, postponed in 2020, be held at the end of May 2021 and that any previous nominees be taken forward and a new round of nominations sought. These proposals were supported, and it was **Resolved** that:

- 1. The draft calendar of Committee and Council meetings for 2021 and 2022 be approved and RECOMMENDED to Full Council for approval.**
- 2. The proposals for the Annual Town Meeting and Merit Awards 2021 be approved and RECOMMENDED to Full Council for approval.**

34.8. Telephone System

The Committee considered a report (previously circulated) which set out proposals to replace the existing Telephone System at the Manor House. The current contract was due to expire on 31st March 2020 and the Council had the option to purchase the existing handsets or start a new lease. Research had shown that the existing handsets were to be discontinued in the UK. The Town Council's supplier had sourced alternative handsets which would be supported and had a call diversion function that would allow office telephone extensions to be forwarded to mobile phones. Although slightly more expensive in terms of the monthly costs, this option was considered better value for money in the longer term because it was a supported system with better functionality. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

New LG handsets from the Council's current suppliers SCS be procured on a hire purchase basis over 5 years with the handsets, hardware and set up for £162 per month and maintenance and line rental charges of £220 per month.

34.9. Community Facilities

An urgent meeting of the Sub-Committee was held on 3rd December 2020 to consider an update on the costs relating to the project to provide a new youth centre in Wick, replacing the Keystone Centre in Eldon Way. It was noted that

a further update would be reported to Council in January. It was **Resolved** that:

The update be noted.

35. Finance

35.1. Committee Finance Report

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which highlighted any significant variances from budget in Income and Expenditure relating to this Committee's budget for 2020 to 2021. Members thanked the Finance team for their work on the reports and it was **Resolved** that:

The report be noted.

35.2. Policy and Finance Committee Draft Budgets 2021 to 2022, 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which set out the draft Policy and Finance Committee Budget for 2021 to 2022 and the projected budgets for 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024. The Town Clerk explained the budget process and it was noted that following the earlier decision of Full Council to fund the extension of the Town Centre Regeneration Officer (TCRO) role for six months, further adjustments to the budget would be required. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. Subject to the adjustment required to support the extension of the TCRO role, the draft Committee budget for 2021 to 2022 and the projected budgets for 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 be agreed and the proposals be RECOMMENDED to Council, as part of the overall Council budget.**

- 2. The Committee's Earmarked Reserve Position be noted.**

35.3. Capital Programme Draft Funding 2021 to 2022 and projected funding 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which sought to explain the funding of the Capital Programme and the financial implications of the priorities as part of the budget setting process. The Town Clerk explained the rationale for converting Capital Receipts Reserves and the flexibility that it gave in terms options for future spending. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

1. **The Capital Programme Draft Funding budget for 2021 to 2022 and the projected funding for 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 be approved and the proposals RECOMMENDED to Council, as part of the overall Council budget.**
2. **Council be RECOMMENDED to meet the £77,000 funding for the new Keystone Centre from the Capital Receipts Reserve, instead of the Loan Capital EMR.**

35.4. Full Council Draft Budget 2021 to 2022, 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which set out the proposed Council budget for 2021 to 2022 and the projected budgets for 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024. Following the earlier decision of Full Council to fund the extension of the TCRO role for six months, further adjustments to the budget would be required impacting the Planning and Transportation budget to ensure that the funding was correctly positioned. The recommendations regarding the Budget proposals were considered en bloc and a recorded vote was taken as set out below:

Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ (Chair)	For
Councillor Blanchard-Cooper	For
Councillor Chace	For
Councillor Long	For
Councillor Tandy	For
Councillor Molloy	For

It was therefore **Resolved** that:

1. **Subject to the adjustment required to support the extension of the TCRO role, the draft Budget for 2021 to 2022 and the projected budgets for 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 be approved and its proposals be RECOMMENDED to Council.**
2. **Council be RECOMMENDED to set a Precept of £1,297,638 for 2021 to 2022.**
3. **Council be RECOMMENDED to set Band D Council Tax at £128.84 per annum for 2021 to 2022, an increase of 2% which is £2.53 more per year (0.048 per week).**

36. Exempt Business

There was none.

The meeting closed at 8:39pm.

CHAIR