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### **Minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 6.30pm**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ (Chair)

Councillor Blanchard-Cooper \*

Councillor Chace

Councillor Long

Councillor Northeast \*

Councillor Molloy\*, Deputy Mayor joined the meeting Ex-Officio.

#### **2020/2021**

**This meeting is available to view using the following link:**

<https://bit.ly/2Nq4Fya>

#### **37. 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.

#### **38. Apologies**

There were apologies from Councillors Blanchard-Cooper and Rhodes.

#### **39. 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.

#### **40. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> December 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.

#### **41. Chair's Report and Urgent Items**

\* Councillor Northeast joined the meeting at 6.36pm.

## 41.1. Town Centre Events

- 41.1.1. The Chair welcomed Becky East, Programme Manager from Artswork to the meeting and she proceeded to deliver a presentation of the proposed programme of entertainment planned for Littlehampton High Street this summer under the Love Local Arts initiative. The initiative itself was a two-year concept for activities designed by Artswork, working with the Town Council and Arun Inspires aimed at delivering high quality, accessible cultural events showcasing the skills and creativity of the community and young people in particular. Total funding of £27,500 had been allocated to the initiative for those two years, £15,000 of which was provided by the Town Council and the remaining £12,500 by Artswork. This was phase two of the Town Council's Town Centre Events initiative.
- 41.1.2. The format was flexible in that it could be delivered in the "pop-up" style and would use artwork from projects associated with the scheme to deliver entertainment. The delivery model provided for support workers and stewarding throughout and featured a mixture of professional and semi-professional acts, photography and the work of local artists. Where external entertainment was used these were based on tried and tested activities that were both engaging and entertaining and had a wide appeal. Artswork were working closely with local artists groups such as LOCA and Arun Youth Projects to deliver the programme and link in with other community activities. It was also noted that the programme had been curated in a Covid safe way and that all artists were insured. The activities were planned to start at the end of July and would run throughout August with marketing planned to promote the activities. A display of the artwork produced throughout the event would be exhibited at the Museum later in the year.
- 41.1.3. In reviewing the package of events, the Committee was impressed with the quality of the proposed programme and welcomed the synergy with local groups and activities. Members also felt that the programme would address wish of residents and visitors who, facing another year of limited travel, would be looking to holiday at home. Overall, it was considered that the programme was imaginative, well planned and with strong Covid protocols that could be adapted as the circumstances required. It was therefore **Resolved** that:
1. **The Love Local Arts programme 2021 be approved at an estimated cost of £12,500 to £15,000 and that progress in developing these proposals as set out in paragraphs 3.4 to 3.5 of the report be noted.**
  2. **The Love Local Arts campaign budget over two years, 2021 to 2022 is £27,500 £15,000 of which is from the Town Centre Events Match Funding budget be noted.**
  3. **The contents of the report be otherwise noted.**

## **41.2. Barclays Bank - Littlehampton**

**41.2.1.** The Committee received notice from Barclays Bank Plc of their intention to close the local branch in the High Street on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2021. It was noted that this decision was not a matter for public consultation and that the Bank considered that access to banking remained sufficient in the local community. In advising of this change in service provision they were also seeking thoughts on what would be the biggest impact of the closure on the local community and ways to support the community to adapt to this change.

**41.2.2.** This news was extremely disappointing to Members who considered that now was not the time for institutions to withdraw from Town Centres generally. Littlehampton in particular would it was thought suffer as the move instantly made the High Street a less attractive place to visit. It was also considered that removing a High Street banking service at this time was detrimental for people of all ages as well as businesses as the community and economy begin to recover from a year of unprecedented hardship. This move also prompted Members to question if the financial services sector were not missing a trick as the need for their services, particularly face to face advice and support, would be greater now. Members also lamented that there was a demand which could be met in more innovative ways by the banks acting collectively, for example by creating a local service “hub”. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

**The Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair,  
draft a response to the consultation on behalf  
the Town Council as set out in point 41.2 above.**

## **42. 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.

## **43. Officer’s Reports**

### **43.1. Council Priorities**

**43.1.1.** Members received a report (previously circulated) which set out progress with a number of previously agreed priorities the 2019/23 Administration as they related to the remit of the Committee. Work had been ongoing to progress these initiatives, and some have also been completed. Members were asked to review the work undertaken to date, decide which of the remaining projects should be prioritized and where appropriate how the remaining work should be progressed. These proposals would be collated and

where appropriate recommended for adoption by Full Council at the end of March.

The Committee proceeded to review the priorities in the context of the current policies of the Council and consider further refinements. In cases where the Committee judged that the Priority could not be delivered, Members also considered if they could be accommodated within existing or through the development of policy and made recommendations accordingly.

#### **43.1.2. Business Continuity Plan**

The business practices implemented in response to the nationwide response to the Covid 19 pandemic had demonstrated the Council's ability to continue to operate effectively in an unprecedented situation. However, it remained a priority to ensure that business continuity arrangements were formally recorded.

**It was therefore Resolved that Council be recommended to retain this priority with a revised target date to have a Business Continuity Plan in place for Autumn 2021.**

#### **43.1.3. Electronic Banking**

The migration to electronic payments had been successful and research into facilitating payments by card was underway. The aim was to begin the implementation of an electronic card payment system when normal business was resumed.

**It was therefore Resolved that Council be recommended to update this priority and aim to have an electronic card payment system in place for Autumn 2021.**

#### **43.1.4. Pier Road Pedestrianisation**

This Priority was a long-standing commitment of the Town Council to the benefits of the pedestrianisation of the southern section of Pier Road to support the tourist economy. To achieve this the Town Council remained committed to supporting the District Council in any consultations associated with progressing a traffic regulation order for the seasonal closure of Pier Road and had stated that it would also look to coordinate street entertainment with traders that would make the area a more attractive facility for residents and tourists.

**It was therefore Resolved that Council be recommended to reaffirm and retain this priority with the commitment to support traders and Arun District Council, who will continue to be the lead on this, to create an attractive pedestrianized environment.**

#### **43.1.5. Recycling Scheme**

It was observed that the Council now had an Environment Policy in place and a financial commitment within the Waste Disposal Budget of £1,000 for recycling initiatives.

**it was therefore Resolved that Council be recommended to endorse its commitment to the principles of environmental sustainability and mark this priority as completed.**

#### **43.1.6. Take on ADC Smaller Open Spaces in Existing Housing Developments**

It was acknowledged that this was only ever a very low Priority for the Town Council because of limited resources.

**It was therefore Resolved that this priority be removed from the priorities list.**

#### **43.1.7 Water Refill Stations**

It was acknowledged that Arun District Council would be taking this forward as part of a programme of seafront public realm improvements.

**It was therefore Resolved that this priority be removed from the priorities list.**

#### **43.1.8. Work with the District Council on possible Town Centre Strategy**

The events of the past year had accelerated the pace of change in the Town Centre highlighting the need for strategy and £9,000 of funding had been earmarked the Council's reserves to support this work. It was also acknowledged that this would require the support of the District Council and work had commenced in developing a strategy.

**It was therefore Resolved that Council be recommended to retain this priority with an anticipated delivery date to have a Town Centre Strategy in place for Autumn 2021 and note that the Earmarked Reserve contains £9,000 provision to support any future Town Centre strategy.**

#### **43.1.9. Town Centre Events**

As reported earlier in the meeting this priority was progressing and budget provision made. Officers, working in partnership with the District Council, continued to explore opportunities for installations that would encourage visitors back into the area once restrictions have eased. This would include researching events to support the re-launch of the High Street once the Public Realm Improvement works had been

completed. Progress would continue to be reported to both this Committee and the Community Resources Committee.

**It was therefore Resolved that Council be recommended to retain this priority and note the total budget provision of £100,000 (over a 2-year period 2021 to 2022 and 2022 to 2023) allocated to deliver Town Centre Events comprising £50,000 from Arun District Council and £50,000 from the Town Council. A further £25,000 is in the projected revenue budget from 2022 to 2023 and beyond should the initiative continue.**

#### **43.1.10. Community Wardens Scheme**

The Council had a long-term commitment to community safety identified previously as Town Centre Policing and was now working in partnership with the District Council to deliver a Community Wardens Scheme. Budget provision had been made and the Scheme was about to commence on an 18-month pilot, with its effectiveness being evaluated at the end. If successful and funding could be secured, the Scheme could also be extended.

**It was therefore Resolved that Council be recommended to remove this priority from the list as a completed task and note the total budget provision to support a total contribution from the Town Council to the pilot scheme of £45,000 per annum over two years (a total of £90,000 over 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022).**

#### **43.1.11. Consider Options for LTC to provide Housing**

Whilst it was acknowledged that the Town Council was not a Housing Authority, Members wished to have a better understanding of the options. It was therefore agreed that the presentation of options, highlighting relevant local housing schemes, from the Sussex Association of Local Councils be pursued.

**It was therefore Resolved that Council be recommended to retain this priority to allow Members to receive a presentation of the options.**

#### **43.1.12. Gateway Public Art North Littlehampton**

This was being progressed by the District Council and the sum of £40,000 was allocated in the Section 106 development agreement for the North Littlehampton to deliver the project. This was planned at a prominent point of entry to the Town and a steering group had been formed to oversee the project. The Town Council wished to see a scheme that would draw visitors into the Town and Members wanted to be involved in the discussions.

**It was therefore Resolved that Council be recommended to retain this priority to allow Members to be involved in the discussions.**

#### **43.1.13. Town Centre Management**

The Town Council had recently agreed to implement new Town Centre Management provision from October 2021 when the current arrangements would cease. The District Council had also accepted the Town Council's offer to continue to support the Town Centre Regeneration Officer post for a further six months until the end of September 2021. It was noted that the Town Clerk would shortly be consulting members for their views on how to proceed including funding which would need to be in place from October 2021.

**It was therefore Resolved that Council be recommended to endorse a new priority to implement Town Centre Management provision from October 2021 and note the £10,000 funding for contribution to the Town Centre Regeneration Officer Post for a six-month extension (taken from the Bus Expenditure EMR) to the end of September 2021.**

#### **43.1.14. Refocussed Major Capital Projects**

The objectives identified within this priority remained valid and it was noted that the replacement playground facilities at Rosemead Park were delivered in December 2020.

**It was therefore Resolved that Council be recommended to note the completion of the replacement playground facilities at Rosemead Park and endorse the progress and funding allocated regarding the remaining projects as follows:**

- a) The replacement Youth centre at Wick, being taken forward by the Property and Personnel Committee and the Community Centres Sub Committee, with a maximum budget allocation of £1,554,657.**
- b) The new community centre at North Littlehampton, being taken forward by the Property and Personnel Committee and the Community Centres Sub Committee and funded through provision in the S106 Development Agreement for North Littlehampton.**
- c) Public Realm Improvements, being taken forward by the District Council with a capital sum of up to £200,000 provided by the Town**

**Council for expenditure on the Beach Road element of these works. A Project Board has been established to oversee this project and is represented by the Town Clerk on this Board.**

- d) The projects relating to St Martins Car Park and the Windmill were being reviewed by Arun District Council and that no further action was required from the Town Council at this stage.**

#### **43.1.15 Littlehampton Traders Partnership Ideas for the High Street**

The Committee reviewed the list of proposals for the future of the High Street that had been received from the Littlehampton Traders Partnership. Members were broadly supportive of the drive to reinvigorate the High Street and initially considered it prudent that the Town Centre Regeneration Officer be asked to investigate how these might be progressed. It was noted that the introduction of litterbins specifically for recycled products were planned for the High Street as part of the Public Realm Improvement works.

**It was therefore Resolved that Council be recommended to endorse a new priority to support initiatives for the regeneration of the High Street through the discussions with the Town Centre Regeneration Officer and as part of future Town Centre Management provision.**

#### **43.1.16. Branding/ Marketing**

Council had identified the need to progress a strong brand that could be used to market the town. Members considered that this should remain a priority in the context of the changes occurring in the parish as a whole as a result of the development of the Hampton Park Estate. It was emphasised that this need not subvert the Gateway Public Art proposals and that the new road network provided an opportunity to introduce new and more impactful signage.

**It was therefore Resolved that Council be recommended to endorse a new priority to support initiatives to introduce new and more impactful gateway signage.**

\* Councillor Blanchard-Cooper joined the meeting at 7.34pm

#### **43.2. West Sussex Association of Local Councils (WSALC)**

The Town Clerk reported that he and the Mayor and Deputy Mayor attended a WSALC Board meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> March. The Board had elected a new Chairman and several new Board Members representing the Arun, Chichester, and Mid Sussex Districts had also joined. He was pleased to report that the discussion had been positive and very much focussed on

developing stronger and more proactive arrangements in the future. Acknowledging the financial pressures faced by its members over the last year and the reduction in overheads that would occur as a result of the implementation of the new WSALC structure, the Board had also agreed that subscriptions would be reduced by 10%. The Committee welcomed the significant progress that had been made and, it was **Resolved** that:

- 1. Council be RECOMMENDED to withdraw its notice of intention to leave WSALC/SSALC/NALC at the end of March 2021 and approve payment of annual subscription for 2021 to 2022.**
- 2. The total 2020 to 2021 subscription to NALC/SALC was £3,388.65 and the subscription fee for 2021 to 2022 will be reported to the Committee at the next meeting.**

\* Councillor Molloy left the meeting at 7.37pm.

#### **43.3. Council Photography**

The Committee had before it a report (previously circulated) which set out how the Council's current contract for photographic services had changed over the last year. The COVID-19 pandemic had forced a review of the services provided and the contractor had adapted and provided video content that could be shared on social media as well as photographs in line with guidance and when circumstances allowed. It was therefore proposed that the current contract, with amendments to include more video content be extended for a further year. The Committee briefly discussed the importance of publicising the Town more widely to attract commercial investment as well as support tourism. Reflecting on the disruption that was likely to occur as a result of the Public Realm Improvement works, Members also highlighted the need to project a positive image of the Town that focussed on the investment and promoted the new environment. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. The unused 2020 to 2021 allowance for a Visit Littlehampton promotional video be approved for use to support the photography contact for a further year.**
- 2. The current photography contract be extended for a further year for 2021 to 2022 at £2,000 the costs of which have been proportionally allocated from the Democratic Services, Town Tourism, Progress Newsletter and Publicity budgets.**
- 3. The contents of the report be otherwise noted.**

#### **43.4. eProgress Competition**

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the development of the Council's eProgress newsletter and a proposal from the Editorial Board to run a prize draw to encourage new subscribers. The Committee were pleased to note the development of the Town Council's newsletter in the new electronic format alongside the traditional newsletter and supported the proposal. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. A prize draw competition for £150 to encourage new subscribers to eProgress be approved and the expenditure met from the Newsletter budget 2021 to 2022.**
- 2. The content of the report be otherwise noted.**

#### **43.5. Census 2021**

The Committee received details of the arrangements for publicising and encouraging participation in the forthcoming nationwide Census. It was **Resolved** that:

**The update be noted.**

#### **44. Finance**

##### **44.1. Committee Finance Report**

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which highlighted any significant variances from budget in Income and Expenditure relating to the Committees budget for 2020 to 2021. The report also set out proposals for the purchase of a further two laptops for Councillors, the short-term reinvestment of the Council's £1 million deposit and potential transfers to Earmarked Reserves at the end of the current financial year. Members supported these recommendations and commended the Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer for her stewardship of the Council's finances. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. The purchase of a further two laptops for the vacant Councillor positions using underspends in Democratic Services of £1,799 be approved.**
- 2. The proposed investment for the £1 million deposit in the short-term be approved.**
- 3. The potential transfers to Earmarked Reserves be approved, and authority**

**delegated to the Responsible Financial Officer to make the final transfers when all current year expenditure was known.**

- 4. The contents of the report be otherwise noted.**

#### **44.2. Annual Investment Strategy 2021 to 2022**

The Committee received a report (previously circulated) which outlined the annual review of the strategy 2021 to 2022. It was **Resolved** that:

**Council be RECOMMENDED to approve the Annual Investment Strategy 2021 to 2022.**

#### **45. Exempt Business**

There was none.

The meeting closed at 8.06pm.

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**CHAIR**