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Minutes of the Policy and Finance Advisory Group held on Monday 14th June 2021 at 6.30pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ (Chair)
Councillor Blanchard-Cooper
Councillor Butcher
Councillor Long
Councillor Molloy (substitute for Councillor Chace)
Councillor Northeast

2021/2022

This meeting is available to view using the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6Fkil-UHQ0>

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 Councillor Chace.

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 meeting held on 15th March 2021 (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.

7. Officer's Reports

7.1. Flag Flying Guidance

The Government had issued new guidance on the flying of the Union Flag from UK Government buildings in March and was encouraging all local authorities in England to fly the Union Flag more frequently on their principal buildings. Members views were therefore sought on a proposal to fly the Union flag at the Manor House all year round unless another flag was being flown. The consensus was that the flying the Union flag was a sign of national pride and noting that other flags could still be flown on certain other occasions, the proposal was supported. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

Full Council be RECOMMENDED to approve a change to the Town Council's Guidelines on Flag Flying allowing the Union flag be flown at the Manor House all year round, unless another flag was being flown.

7.2. Pier Road Entertainment Expenditure

7.2.1 The Advisory Group received a report (previously circulated) which sought approval transfer funds the Community Resources Earmarked Reserves to secure entertainment in support of the Pier Road closure during the summer. Pier Road had been temporarily designated as a pedestrianised area for the summer months and the Town Council has committed to facilitating entertainment at this location, especially during the weekends of July and August. The funding would ensure that a range of acts were secured and might also encourage local businesses to become involved.

7.2.2. The activities proposed focussed on small scale family entertainment such as music, face painting magic and mine. Members welcomed this year's initiative and observing that the closure was already in place were pleased to see that searing and permanent barriers had been introduced. Noting that this had only been possible using regulations introduced during the pandemic Members wished to build on this success. It was therefore considered that if this were to become a permanent seasonal arrangement, work would need to start now. Members still wished to see more attractive signage including banners

and posters that directed visitors to the area as leisure facility and promoted the entertainment and that, planting be introduced. These suggestions were noted and would be taken forward as the scheme became established. It was therefore **RESOLVED that accordance with the decision made by Full Council on 29th April 2021, authority be delegated to the Town Clerk:**

- 1) To vire £8,000 from the Community Resources Committee's Earmarked Reserves for Event Support to fund the entertainment on Pier Road.**
- 2) In consultation with the Chairs and Vice Chairs of this Advisory Group and the Community Resources Advisory Group, to approve the list of acts and make appropriate payments to facilitate this up to a maximum of £8,000.**

7.3. Town Centre, High Street Events and Welcome Back Fund

7.3.1. The Committee received a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the work with Arun District Council (ADC) to develop a Town Centre Strategy and the programme for High Street events over the summer holidays in partnership with Artsworld. It was noted that a draft Town Centre Strategy document would soon be shared with Town Councillors inviting Members to contribute through a series of sessions focused at developing the strategy further.

7.3.2. The Love Local Arts High Street Programme was due to be launched on Saturday 31st July 2021. Operating every Saturday of the Summer holidays there would be an array of free high quality, fun arts events suitable for all the family in the High Street. Discussions were being held aimed at expanding this further and the Programme would be backed by a comprehensive marketing campaign.

7.3.3. In addition, ADC had advised the Town Council of a new funding source, the Welcome Back Fund, which was an extension of the European Regional Development Fund that funded activities under the Reopening the High Street Fund initiative introduced in 2020. Parishes were invited to suggest ways in which the funds might be used to support the local economy post COVID-19. Details of the scope of the funding and FAQs were also previously circulated to Members. An initial list of items that were eligible for funding including, light projections, floral displays, and marketing had been made and Members were invited to make further suggestions so that a bid could be progressed. These would be collated by the Town Clerk so that further research could be undertaken. Members wished to be consulted prior to any decision being taken. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) In accordance with the decision made by Full Council on 29th April 2021, authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in**

consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Advisory Group to agree and progress bids for Welcome Back Funding (following consultation with Members of the Committee*).

- 2) The progress with developing a Town Centre Strategy and Love Local Arts in the High Street entertainment programme be noted.**

* Note by the Town Clerk, if the project expenditure is over £10,000 all Councillors will be consulted in accordance with Standing Order 13d.

7.4. Community Wardens

7.4.1. The Advisory Group received a report (previously circulated) which set out a summary of the work undertaken by the Community Wardens following the start of the scheme on 8th April 2021. Members had also recently had the opportunity to meet the Wardens to understand how they operated and highlight areas of concern. To date feedback had been positive, and Members were reassured with the skills, experience, and knowledge that each member of the team brought to the role. It was noted that the next full report would be presented to the Advisory Group in September which one of the Wardens would attend.

7.4.2. It was noted that the Wardens were engaged with other agencies through the Community Safety Team at Arun District Council enabling them to share intelligence and understand local issues. It was emphasised that whilst the Wardens could not replace the Police, they did provide a uniformed presence which reassured residents. Members did not wish to lose sight of the overall lack of Police presence in the Town and questioned the absence of PCSO's which had been promised to cover the Town. The Town Clerk reported that he would be meeting the Chief Inspector for the area later that week and would raise this with him. It was **Resolved** that:

The report be noted.

7.5. Town Centre Manager

7.5.1. The Advisory Group had before it information drawn from a confidential questionnaire seeking direction on the development of the Town Centre Manager role. Members were asked to review this information alongside feedback from the Traders (previously circulated) to agree how to progress the creation of a Town Council post of Town Centre Manager and make a recommendation to Full Council. It was noted that the new role could have TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006) implications.

7.5.2. Members proceeded to consider the scope of the role, responsibilities

and accountability. The suggestions put forward by the Traders Partnership were considered a good starting point but there was also a strong view that the Town Council should take a leadership role in terms of supporting the Town Centre and directing the post. Members favoured a role that would coordinate marketing, advertising, and social media to promote the Town Centre with the ability to respond to and provide wide ranging support for Town Traders. In this respect the post would need to have a detailed knowledge of each trader and be able to provide administration support to the Partnership. It was however also commented that the post was more than administrative and needed to be able to function as an advocate for Traders with the ability to lead a steering group of all relevant agencies, local authorities and stakeholders and deliver the new Town Centre strategy. Members also wished to see the post include Wick Parade and its environs and considered that it should be based in the Manor House.

7.5.3. Whilst Members had previously been clear that they wished to see a post that was very different from the current arrangement, it was evident from the discussion that a role that could perform both administrative and strategic functions was envisaged. This raised the issue of potential crossover with the existing role which could have implications for the Town Council under the TUPE employment regulations that would in all likelihood require the Council to obtain legal advice. This would also need to be considered by the Property and Personal Committee. It was also noted that whilst there was funding available to meet the costs of continuing with the current arrangements until the end of the current financial year, any future costs would have to be met from the precept as the Town Council did not benefit from Business Rates. Acknowledging these factors, the Advisory Group considered that further work was required. However, this was also a priority for the Council, and it was therefore considered important that Members have the opportunity to review and comment upon the emerging proposals. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

A report be taken to Council inviting their comments and direction on how to proceed.

7.6. Policy Recommendation

The Advisory Group was asked to consider endorsing a proposal that the Town Council adopt the following policy: That Littlehampton Town Council supports the provision of access to all facilities in the Town for people of all abilities. The proposal had also received the unanimous support of the Community Resources Advisory Group and it was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

Full Council be RECOMMENDED to adopt the policy that Littlehampton Town Council supports the provision of access to all

facilities in the Town for people of all abilities.

8. Finance

8.1. Committee Budget Monitor

8.1.1. The Advisory Group received a report (previously circulated) which highlighted any significant variances from budget in income and expenditure for year ended 31st March 2021 and the first quarter of 2021 to 2022. It was **Resolved** that:

The report be noted.

8.1.2. Vote of thanks

Members were sad to note that this was the last report that Laura Chrysostomou, the Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, would prepare for this Advisory Group. Members formally recorded their thanks for her extraordinarily diligent work and maintaining such high standards of reporting. Ms Chrysostomou was also commended for the clarity of presentation in her reports, her patience in dealing with Member's enquiries and they wished her well in her new role.

9. Exempt Business

There was none.

The meeting closed at 7.56pm.

CHAIR