

REPORT OF THE POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING 5TH APRIL 2016

MEMBERSHIP & ATTENDANCE

- Chairman:** * Tony Edwards
- Councillors:** * Barbara Dickens
Barbara Green
* Rodney Kipps
Alison Preedy
* Martin Trevett
* Steve Watkins
Jane White

*Denotes members present

- Officers Present:** * Yvonne Merritt - Clerk
* Claire James – Deputy Clerk

There were no members of the public present

Recommendations:

1. WEBSITE

Cllr Barbara Green was not present at the meeting to present her recommendations. It was noted however that Cllrs Jane White and Jenny Wood had come up with some good ideas that could be taken forward. Cllr Martin Trevett stated that it was important to raise the profile of the Parish Council. There was confusion over which Council i.e. Parish, District of County, is responsible for what, particularly at Parish level and perhaps this could be made clearer. The Clerk suggested that a working party be set up consisting of Cllrs Jane White, Jenny Wood with Laura Hamilton and Claire James.

The Committee

Resolved to Recommend to Full Council

That a working party be set up consisting of Cllrs Jane White, Jenny Wood with Laura Hamilton and Claire James to take the ideas forward.

2. DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF FOR VILLAGE HALLS

Members were advised that it was understood that all Halls in the District were affected by the removal of the discretionary rate relief for Village Halls. Cllr Martin Trevett as a District Councillor gave Members the background to the change

The Committee

Resolved to recommend to Full Council

To increase the budget to the Village Halls Committee to cover the £1,811.57 that was needed for funding of business rates out of reserves.

This was proposed from the Chair and carried unanimously.

15/63 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies for absence from Cllrs Barbara Green and Alison Preedy. Cllr Jane White was also absent from the meeting.

15/64 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest

15/65 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting dated 26th January 2016 which had been taken at Full Council with no amendments, be approved as a true and correct record.

15/66 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

15/57 Draft Capital & Revenue Budget – In response to a question from the Chairman, the Clerk advised that the contact Cllr Jane White had provided had not been able to help but that two other people had looked at the building and come up with alternative ideas. These will be reviewed and will be brought to the next meeting.

15/61 IT Contract – See confidential business minutes.

A request was made for a presentation of the mapping system as being used by the office, particularly with respect to the planning element. The Clerk explained that Officers were still on a learning curve but that several very useful maps had been produced with the assistance of the company. It was suggested that the next Full Council in June would be the target for such a presentation.

15/67 FINANCIAL COMPARISON STATEMENT 2015/16

It was noted that this report represented only a few days short of the full financial year and the Committee felt that it showed a reasonable picture. The Clerk advised that the precept had come in the previous day and confirmed that this was for half the year.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the financial comparison statement.

15/68 QUARTERLY CASH BOOK

The Clerk advised that she would like to look at the investments over the coming year as interest rates were beginning to recover.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note the quarterly cashbook figures.

15/69 WEBSITE

See Recommendation 1.

15/70 FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT

Members discussed what plans should be put in place to cover the scenario of the office building being inaccessible and whether the Common Room at the War Memorial Hall was an acceptable back up. Whilst this has internet access it does not have a telephone line and on this basis it might be that the Bullsland Hall was a better alternative.

It was noted that on Page 2 of the Risk Assessment the Procurement item had not been updated. The Policy and Resources Committee had re-assessed Standing Orders to take into account the new model of NALC and accepted the changes at their meeting of the 3rd November 2015 (Minute 15/45 Standing Orders). This item should therefore reflect the action was completed and no further action was required.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To accept the Risk Assessment and that they were happy with the effectiveness of the Internal Audit.

This was proposed by the Chair and unanimously approved.

15/71 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

The Clerk advised the following changes to the calendar of meetings as presented:

28th March 2017 would be Full Council only

9th May 2017 would be the Annual meeting and the Annual Parish meetings (i.e. the Annual Parish Meeting would move from the 28th March to the 9th May)

There were also no Parish Council elections in May 2017, they would be in 2018.

The Chairman asked when it was intended to move the Council meetings to the Common Room. The Clerk advised Members that a meeting had been held at the hall the previous week to identify everything that needed to be actioned in order for the transfer to take place. This included the sound proofing which was necessary to the Common Room. The doors to the Common Room had been locked and Members expressed concern that they were fire doors and was this correct. The Clerk advised that they were fire doors i.e. to stop the spread of fire but were not emergency exits. She went through the emergency evacuation arrangements from the main hall and Common room perspectives and advised that these had been agreed by the fire service and she had a full fire certificate. They had also been discussed with the Council's Health and Safety contact at Herts County.

Cllr Martin Trevett advised that several of the Full council meetings clashed with meetings at the District. The Clerk advised that it was difficult to move these as the calendar was drawn up to tie in with the planning requirements of the District which was accepted.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To accept the Calendar of meetings with the above amendments.

15/71 HOLLYBUSH HALL

The Clerk explained that although the proposals of the Montessori School at the Hollybush had been presented to the Halls committee at a recent meeting, they were not quorate on the night and had therefore been unable to make a decision. As the Parish owned the Hall it had therefore come to Policy and Resources for decision. The Clerk explained the background and further information she had received in an email from the lady requesting the long term hire of the hall. Cllr Martin Trevett asked what the situation was regarding business rates, the Clerk advised that these would be covered by the Parish Council for the first year and would not be payable in the second year as, under new legislation the hall fell below the 12K threshold introduced. Cllr Rodney Kipps raised concerns that the Youth Club was only licensed for 20 people, this venture would have 16 in a space a third of the size of the Youth Club. The fixed price for the first two years was explained with the view expressed that after this the Council would have a better understanding of the utilities costs. It was noted that the Council would continue to insure the building, the licence holder would insure the contents.

The Committee

RESOLVED

- a) To agree to the licence for the Hollybush Hall for a period of five years
- b) To agree that works can start prior to the commencement date of the licence for marketing purposes and that any costs will be recovered from the licensee in the unlikely event that the licence does not go ahead.
- c) That the legal costs of drawing up the licence are recovered from the Licensee.

This was proposed by Cllr Martin Trevett, seconded by Cllr Steve Watkins and carried unanimously.

15/72 HERTFORSHIRE PENSION FUND 2016 TRIENNIAL VALUATION

Members agreed that it made sense for the Parish Council to remain in the Pooling arrangement as it reduces the risk for the Council. It was noted that in the previous 18 years there had only been one retiree from the Council but that within a period of five years there was the potential for four people to retire.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the Parish continue with the pooling arrangement for the Pension Fund

15/73 DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF FOR VILLAGE HALLS

See Recommendation 2

15/74 COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

In the absence of Cllr Jane White from the meeting, the Clerk advised that the Chairmanship of the Community and Neighbourhood plan Group had been discussed at a recent planning meeting. It was understood that Cllr Jane White wished to stand down from the role and a non councillor was willing to take the role on. The Clerk explained that in this case Terms of Reference (TORs) would need to be supplied. It was agreed that this would be discussed at Planning and TORs would be agreed. The Planning Committee could then make the appropriate recommendation to Full council.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To refer the matter back to the Planning Committee.

15/75 THE FOUR YEAR VISION

Members agreed to defer this to the next meeting when other matters would be a little more settled and more time could be given to the Strategic plan.

15/76 HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Deputy Clerk advised Members of the outcome of the visit from the H&S Officer from HCC carrying out a risk assessment of all aspects of the office and the building. A number of issues were now being followed up and would require some time to be devoted to the subject with some items being covered at Team meetings.

15/77 CLOSURE

The meeting having started at 7.30 pm, finished at 9.10 pm

These minutes have been checked by the Chairman.

Signatureagreed via email Date.....11/4/16.....

These minutes were agreed as a true and correct record at the Policy & Resources meeting and signed by the Chairman.

Signature Date