

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ASHURST WOOD FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE MEETING** held on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018, 7.48 pm at Council's Meeting Room.

**PRESENT:** Cllrs: Rob Bright (Chairman), Margaret Bussell, Jenny Forbes, David Loveday, Brian Phillips, and Derek Wailes.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Caroline Leet (Clerk)

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** 0

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Responsibility of

212. **Public Questions**  
None.

213. **Apologies for absence**  
Cllr Samways's apologies were received and **resolved; the reasons were accepted.**

214. **To receive Declarations of Interests from Members in respect of any matter on the agenda**  
None.

215. **To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018**  
The minutes were **approved as an accurate account of the meeting.**

216. **Clerk's Report**  
The Clerk's report was received. Cllr Bright noted a typo with Cllr Bussell's name (typed Russell) under 'date for the Risk Assessment' which was still yet to be set. Cllr Bussell noted under item 7, code 4040 (Youth Club) should be 4041 (Youth Club expenses).

a **To receive bank reconciliations for October 2018**

Cllr Bright confirmed that the bank reconciliations for the Unity Trust bank account, Public Sector Deposit Fund and the FairFX pre-paid cards for October had been checked by Cllr Bussell and were in order.

b **To note: Employee appraisals will be carried out in December**

Noted. Cllr Bright said that the Clerk's appraisal was also needed and a date needed to be arranged.

BP/RB

217. **Audit**

a **To receive the Internal Auditors (IA) half-yearly report**

i. **To amend the Financial Regulations for bank reconciliations (2.2): to include reconciling the bank balances with the balance sheet and reserves report**

Cllrs Bright and Bussell said that they had looked at the balance sheet and agreed it would be good practice to include with bank reconciliations and this would also allow for the reserves to be checked at the same time. Members **agreed to recommend to the full Council to amend the Financial Regulations for bank reconciliations (2.2) to include reconciling the bank balances with the balance sheet and reserves report**

Clerk

ii. **To consider amending Financial Regulations 10.1 and 10.2: to no-longer have purchase orders (these are only raised for orders that are not regular**

**expenditure) as they do not improve the controls and add to administration**

Members discussed. The Clerk added that there was always an expenditure paper trace with the invoice or receipts and therefore, purchase orders did not serve a purpose in a small organisation. Members **agreed to recommend to the full Council to amend the Financial Regulations 10.1 and 10.2 to no-longer have purchase orders.**

Clerk

218. **Budget 2018/19**

**To review the predicted year-end**

The income and expenditure report (dated 15<sup>th</sup> November) was received; it was noted that the report was 62% through the year. Cllr Bright said there was nothing new to report since the Committee's October meeting. The budgeted carry forward reserves were £34,708; the projected carry forward reserves were £40,832 (plus the ear-marked reserves). There were no questions and it was noted that they continue to be well managed.

219. **To receive feedback on the staffing hours for the role of the handyman**

Cllr Bright reported that he and the Clerk had met with the Handyman to discuss his hours and review the work carried out. To summarise: the Handyman had agreed that he should be fulfilling the contracted four hours per week and that he would aim to achieve this. He did not think that the role required any additional hours and in any case, he would not be able to commit to more hours. The job description together with a detailed time sheet and annual tasks list did cover the role of the Handyman sufficiently; however, it was agreed that the Clerk and Handyman would meet on the first Monday of each month to set the main tasks for the coming month. Members continued to discuss. It was noted that the Handyman did carry out tasks such as putting up the event notices fairly promptly when asked, but there were other routine tasks which were noted not be being done such as leaf clearance. It was suggested that perhaps some tasks such as the cleaning of the office windows which could be contracted out. It was agreed to continue with the quarterly meetings.

RB/Clerk

220. **To reconsider membership of Sussex Surrey Association of Local Councils (SSALC)**

Members **agreed** in view of the elections and new Council in May, it would be sensible to budget for membership of Sussex Surrey Association of Local Councils (SSALC). The new Council could then make its decision about membership of SSALC.

221. **Budget 2019/20: To consider the draft budget for the new financial year and make recommendation to the Village Council**

Cllr Bright presented the proposed draft budget which had been prepared by Cllr Phillips, the Clerk and himself and taking in to account the recommendations from the previous meeting. The main changes were:

- Staffing (4000) – to leave at £35,200. Whilst it had already been recognised that there would be staff savings by not holding Ashstock in 2019, there would be the annual 4% increase (approximately 2% scale increment and 2% inflation increase)
- Consultancy and Training (4010) – The budget had been doubled to allow for new Councillor training

- Subscriptions (4026) – this had been left at £750, but if the Council was to renew its SSALC membership, another £600 would need to be allocated. However, as SSALC members, training costs would be less (at members' rates) the training budget could be reduced commensurately
- Community Transport (4064) – increased from £1,800 to £2,000 to allow for inflation increase and new driver training
- Loan repayment (4090) – the loan for the Village Centre would end in July 2019 and therefore only one repayment; the budget had been reduced to £1,350
- Civic Amenity Collections (4211) – it had already been resolved to increase this to £1,000 to allow for three collections
- Community Equipment (4241) – provision for a shared community Speed Indicator Device (SID) was looking promising with other local parishes; £500 had been allocated

Cllr Wailes suggested the Office Equipment (4070) budget should be increased to allow for new screens and stands for the office. He said that improved screen set-up allowing for two screens to work from would improve the working environment and was advantageous when transferring between documents. Members discussed. It was agreed to increase the budget from £1,000 to £1,500.

Members referred to the shared SID scheme and wondered if purchasing its own SID should be considered. It was agreed that the Road Safety reserve budget (5001) would allow for this if this was something the Council were to consider in the future.

Cllr Bussell asked if any money could be allocated to the provision of electronic bus signs; this had been raised at the last full Council meeting and was also something that the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire feedback had supported. Members agreed further details and the proposed costs were needed to be known before it could be included in the budget. However, if these were available for the Council's December meeting, the budget could be changed to include if the full Council agreed to support this project.

Cllr Bright said looking at the Precept (1076), 2017/18 was £67,000; if it was increased for 2018/19 to £68,000 this would be a 1.4% increase. Inflation was currently at 2.5%.

Referring to the end-of-year carry forward reserves 2017/18 budget was £34,708; with the proposed budget 2018/19 and increasing the precept to £68,000, this would be £35,103.

Members discussed; it was agreed that they would prefer the precept to be a minimal increase unless there was a specific project to justify an increase for example, the electronic bus sign. It was also noted that the tax base figure, currently at 745.8, was yet to be advised by Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC). Members **agreed to recommend the draft budget with a precept increase to £68,000 to the full Council.**

Clerk

The Clerk asked for clarification with codes 4010 and 4026. It was agreed to leave as they were and if the new Council did renew its membership to SSALC, the training expenditure would be less than budgeted (approximated by £600) and the subscription expenditure would be over budget by the corresponding amount.

## 222. To receive an update on General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

Cllr Bright noted following the October meeting and the full Council's approval, the Data Protection and GDPR Audit Note March 2018 – updated 15<sup>th</sup> October 2018 had now been updated and was on the Council's website.

a **To receive a draft copy of a new Retention Policy**

Cllr Forbes said the draft Retention Policy was based on the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) template. The Clerk had gone through and had raised a query regarding the maintaining records of appropriate disposal of documents. She agreed this seemed to defeat the purpose. Cllr Wailes said that for a large council or a corporate body a record of disposal may be required for some documentation, but the retention policy should be outlining what records were kept and when disposed of. Members **agreed** maintaining a record of documentation disposal in addition to the retention policy was not necessary. Members **agreed to recommend the retention policy to the full Council for adoption**. The Clerk would update the Policy.

Clerk

223. **Personnel policies: To receive a draft copy of the Special Leave Policy (this to include arrangements for bereavement leave and Jury Service)**

The draft Special Leave Policy prepared by Cllr Forbes was received. Cllr Forbes pointed out that the employees' contracts covered annual leave and leave for sickness and maternity. The draft Special Leave Policy covered leave which falls outside these circumstances.

There are some statutory entitlements to time off work, but this is generally unpaid unless allowed by the contract or a Council policy. Requests for Special Leave must be made to the Clerk, while requests by the Clerk must be dealt with by the Council (or a Committee). Members were reminded that the Council is a body corporate and decisions about employment matters cannot be delegated to an individual Councillor. They can be delegated to the Clerk, but management of the Clerk cannot be delegated to another employee (as the Clerk is the Council's most senior employee). There may be emergency situations where the request for leave is considered after it has been taken or started.

Cllr Forbes had looked at several other policies covering public and private sectors and had referred to guidance from Unison and ACAS. Members discussed the draft. It was noted that the Council only had part time employees and flexibility was already given to accommodate personal needs, for example with swapping working days, starting late or finishing early. It was also not possible to prescribe for every eventuality. In some cases annual leave and unpaid leave could also be used in addition to paid Special Leave. In appropriate circumstances an employee might need to take a period of sick leave.

Members agreed that paid bereavement leave should be allowed for one normal week (this would be in addition to reasonable unpaid leave, which is allowed by law following the death of a close relative). Members also agreed to allow up to two weeks unpaid special leave for an employee who is a member of the reserve forces to attend training camp.

Paid leave will be allowed for the standard two weeks of jury service, but any longer period will be unpaid leave and the employer will have to claim the allowance from the Court. The Council will pay any amount required to top up the Court allowance to the employee's regular salary.

Members **agreed Cllr Forbes to update to draft policy and for this to be presented to the full Council for adoption**.

JF/Clerk

224. **To consider abolishing council committees and holding one Council meeting**

**each month combining all council business**

Cllr Bright introduced this which he was proposing for discussion; one meeting for all council business would be lengthy, but may reduce some of the office hours in meeting preparation. Cllr Forbes said that she viewed this as a backward step and would be more work for the Chairperson when preparing for a meeting. SSALC recommend the use of committees which is more professional as they are meetings open to the public. If there were no committees, there would likely be working groups; these meetings are not open to the public and therefore less transparent. It would also be difficult to absorb the planning committee as planning applications do not necessarily coincide with full Council meetings and therefore extra ordinary meetings would need to be called. Cllr Phillips said that with the current format he did not think work or discussion was duplicated as the full Council received recommendations from Committees. Members discussed; it was noted that where councils did have only one meeting, the meetings sometimes ran on until 11.30 pm and the minutes were very lengthy. Members **agreed** to leave the Council and its committee arrangements as they were.

225. **Any Items for reporting or inclusion on future agenda**  
None.

Cllr Forbes noted that she had not received a newsletter in the house to house deliveries. She also reported some comments on the Facebook page saying the newsletter had not been received.

226. **Date of next meeting** – Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> January (quarterly review)  
It was noted this was changed from pre-advertised date 22<sup>nd</sup> January. Cllr Phillips said that the January meeting had not always been needed. Members agreed to continue with the January meeting.

Meeting was closed at 21:03

Chairman.....

Date.....