

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ASHURST WOOD FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE MEETING held on Tuesday 19th March 2019, 7.45 pm at Council's Meeting Room.

PRESENT: Cllrs: Rob Bright (Chairman), Margaret Bussell, Jenny Forbes, Jonathan Samways, and Derek Wailes.

IN ATTENDANCE: Caroline Leet (Clerk)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 0

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Responsibility of

240. **Public Questions**
None.

241. **Apologies for absence**
Cllrs Loveday and Phillips' apologies were received and **resolved; the reasons were accepted.**

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

243. **To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held 15th January 2019**
The minutes were **approved as an accurate account of the meeting.**

244. **Clerk's Report**

The Clerk's report was received.

a **To receive bank reconciliations for December 2018, January and February 2019**

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

b **To note: On 4th March, West Sussex Pension Fund moved its day-to-day administration from Capita to Hampshire Pension Services. As part of the transfer a review of the scheme documents has been carried out (feedback can be made to WSCC)**

Noted. Cllr Bright noted the Clerk was due to attend a session on 3rd April on the new arrangements for completing annual returns.

c **Audit information: Moore Stephens are the appointed external auditors and are yet to provide details for end-of-year Annual Returns; however, completion and publication will be similar to previous years.**

Internal Auditor arrangements are likely to be week 22nd April

Noted.

245. **Budget 2018/19**

a **To review the predicted year-end**

The income and expenditure report (dated 14th March; 95% through the year) was received. Cllr Bright reported the end-of-year was £796 overspend on the budget; it was noted that there were no items of contention. He thanked the Clerk for management of the budget. The budgeted carry-forward reserves for budget 2019/20 were £34,508. There were no questions.

246. **To receive feedback on the recruitment of the new Cleaner for John Pears Pavilion and the office**

Cllr Bright reported following the March full Council meeting, that he and the Clerk had interviewed three applicants for the Cleaner position. An offer on an employed basis had been made to Hazel Standing who was due to start on 20th March. She would be paid at the National Joint Council (NJC) scale LC1 (5-6).

247. **Shopping Bus – to review and consider the viability of the Shopping Bus in view of the recent increase to the bus hire costs by Community Transport (42.54% increase), effective 1st April**

Cllr Bright said that the response from Community Transport regarding an explanation to the hiked increase to its hire charges (from £31.57 to £45.00 per hire session) was basically, tough. Members discussed, including revisiting the possibility of providing taxis instead of the mini bus. However, they concluded that the volunteer drivers provided a personal service to the residents, especially those that had mobility issues and they also helped with carrying shopping to the door. Another suggestion would be to charge the users of the bus, but members agreed this would add administration time and additional staff time. They agreed that the Shopping Bus was a valued community service. Cllr Wailes pointed out that Community Transport were a non-profit organisation and a charity and were subject to the same funding cuts that other organisations were also facing. Cllr Bussell mentioned that the 42.5% increase would mean an addition £700 on the budget (code 4064). Members were not happy with the curt response from Community Transport and asked the Clerk to write again, but to a more senior level expressing that the email response was inexplicit, and the short notice was unhelpful for budgeting.

Clerk

248. **Election costs**

Cllr Bright mentioned that whilst it was unlikely that the Council would have 20 or more candidates at the forthcoming May elections, if there were the election costs would increase from £1,600 to £3,000 because at that level a bespoke counting system is used.

249. **To review annual membership of Sussex and Surrey Local Association of Councils (SSALC) for 2019/20 and to make a recommendation to the full Council**

Cllr Bright said as it seemed likely that the majority of the councillors are not standing for another Council term, should Sussex and Surrey Local Association of Councils (SSALC) membership for 2019/20 be reconsidered? Assuming seven new councillors training sessions and one Chairman's briefing session, the training costs at non-members rates would be marginally higher than if the Council was to pay for membership and therefore eligible for members' discount. Cllr Wailes said that he thought it had already been agreed for the new Council to make the decision on SSALC membership. Cllr Bussell replied that was before the number of councillors stepping down was known and more councillors requiring training. Members voted on annual membership of SSALC. The vote was: in favour, four; against, one vote. A recommendation will be made to the full Council.

Clerk

250. **To review the approved budget 2019/20 and to note any possible variances**

Members reviewed the 2019/20 budget. Of note:

- Community Transport (4064) – due to an unexpected increase to the hire costs (estimated £700), the budget set of £2,000 was projected to increase to £2,700
- Winter Management (4212) – due to Public Liability insurance issues, the arrangements for 2018/19 had been suspended. Changes to the budget of £250 would be dependent on the arrangements for 2019/20.
- Elections (4030) – it was noted that if there were not 10 or more candidates standing, there would not be an election and therefore the budget of £1,600 would not be spent.

251. **The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018: As of 23rd September 2019, every new public sector website and app will need to meet certain accessibility standards; existing websites have until 22nd September 2020**

Cllr Wailes reported that the Council's website provider Wordpress generic themes from the 20 series were compliant with the new mobile applications accessibility regulations; however, the Council's website was currently using a different theme which was not compliant. He suggested that perhaps Cllr Forbes and he could look at the compliant themes and select a suitable one. He added that it was the Council's responsibility to ensure that they were compliant; for example, the text should be able to increase or decrease in size, colour changes for people with visual impairment and pictures needed to have tags and a file name representative of what it is. Cllr Bright noted that the Council did have until September 2020 to be compliant, but work should start on updating file names and transferring the website over to a compliant theme.

DW/JF

252. **To consider a review of the Freedom of Information and Publication scheme policy**

Cllr Forbes said that the Council's current Freedom of Information (FOI) and Publication Scheme policy was out of date; this had been noted when reviewing documentation for new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), but had come to the forefront with a recent FOI request. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) had a template which was compliant, and it should be fairly straightforward to prepare a new policy. Cllr Forbes said that she would prepare a draft for the full Council to consider.

JF

253. **Any Items for reporting or inclusion on future agenda**

To review the website and compliance with Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

Clerk

To consider website training and future management arrangements.

Clerk

Cllr Forbes reported that she had been reviewing the Council's Standing Orders and looking at the National Association of Councils (NALC) model Standing Orders. This may be something that the new Council would have to continue with if she did not have them ready for the full Council's April meeting.

JF

254. **Date of next meeting – Tuesday 16th July tbc (1st quarter review)**

Chairman.....

Date.....