

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ASHURST WOOD FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE MEETING held on Tuesday 28th November 2017, 19:45 at Council's Meeting Room.

PRESENT: Cllrs: Margaret Bussell (Chair), Rob Bright, Jenny Forbes, David Loveday and Derek Wailes.

IN ATTENDANCE: Caroline Leet (Clerk)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 0

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

150 Public Questions

None.

Responsibility of

151. Apologies for absence

Cllrs Phillips and Samways' apologies were received and **resolved; the reasons were accepted.**

152. To receive Declarations of Interests from Members in respect of any matter on the agenda

None.

153. To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held 17th October 2017
The minutes were **approved as an accurate account of the meeting.**

154. Clerk's Report

The Clerk's report was received.

a To receive bank reconciliations for October 2017

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

b To note: following the last meeting, the Council's insurance company has confirmed that Business Interruption cover includes expenses incurred in replacing a Key Person (council treasurers, financial officers, secretaries, clerks, deputy clerks, groundsman or deputy groundsman aged between 21 and 90) in the event of death, accidental bodily injury or contracting an illness or disease lasting more than 14 days up to £2,500 (weekly benefit £250)

Noted. One member asked if this included sick leave relating to operations and did this need to be explored. Cllr Bussell pointed out that any claim would likely affect the following year's premium.

c To note: ALCC (the Trade Union for Clerks) will be increasing its membership subscription to £30 per member from 1st April

Noted. Cllr Forbes reminded members that the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) used to incorporate the trade union role for clerks, but had recently separated this role and the Association of Local Council Clerks (ALCC) had been established. Cllr Wailes questioned if the Council should be paying union fees.

d To note: Employee appraisals have either already been carried out or arranged for December

Noted.

Clerk - AMVC

155. Audit:

a To receive the internal auditor's half-yearly report

The Internal Auditor's report was received. Cllr Bussell said, that she noted the

comments regarding the procedures to monitor staffing hours; however, perhaps the auditor didn't have the full background to appreciate why this was monitored in detail. Cllr Wailes said that he found the auditor's statement on transparency to be contemptible. The advice on the previous report was not a legal requirement and therefore cannot be best practice. Cllr Forbes mentioned that the local government transparency paper does say the Transparency Code is expected as best practice for parish councils with a turnover between £25,000 and £200,000. However, the advice from the Internal Auditor was not the same as she wanted us to follow the code for councils below £25k and to publish all payments over £100 and not £500 as per the transparency code's best practice advice. Cllr Forbes added that the internal auditor is supposed to be reviewed periodically.

156. : **Budget 2017/18**

a **To review the half-yearly expenditure**

Cllr Bussell said looking at the Excel spreadsheet dated 21st November, 64% through the year, the income and expenditure net result was in line with the predicted budget; predicted total expenditure £74,851 and predicted income £77,596. However, there were issues with the current heating system which would need to be resolved and could result in additional expenditure. She praised the Clerk and Assistant Clerk for continuing to work in an office with no heating.

Referring to the staffing budget (4000), Cllr Bussell reminded members that this did include an element of overtime to help cover additional hours mainly resulting from events. This figure allowed for approximately 84 hours of which most had been used with just two hours remaining for the rest of the financial year. Therefore, she had advised the Clerk that when approving the wages she would not be in a position to approve any further overtime; and this would need to be discussed by the Committee at its next meeting. Cllr Forbes said that at the March meeting it had been agreed that overtime would only be approved with prior agreement. Cllr Bussell replied that at the June meeting it had been minuted that this did not work practically and that situations had occurred where overtime had been worked. The timesheets were detailed and checked thoroughly and any overtime hours were closely monitored. The hours had also been discussed at the October meeting. She added, that having discussed the overtime with the Clerk, it was unlikely there would be any further overtime over the next two or three months.

157. **To consider pay increments when an employee has reached the maximum scale within their salary scale**

Cllr Bussell reminded members that the Council used the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government pay scales. The Cleaner and the Assistant Clerk had reached the maximum spinal level within their pay scales. Last year, when the cleaner reached her maximum level, the budget allowed for a discretionary 2% increase to her pay. Cllr Forbes said that the Council should stick to the employee contracts which state that pay increments will be awarded until they reach the maximum of the scale. She continued, reminding members that the NJC scales were subject to the governments pay freeze and in 2016 they did receive an increase for the next two years. She added that the NJC were currently negotiating a review of the pay and would expect a decision to be announced after April 2018. Any pay increases to the scales would be backdated and employees would be eligible to this. Members discussed and **agreed the following recommendation: to continue to award pay increments as per employee contracts and when an employee reaches the maximum spinal level within their scale to receive only**

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the increases as and when agreed by the National Joint Council for Local Government

158. To confirm new expenditure codes for the budget 2018/19:

- **4066 Ashdown Forest Conservators grant (2-year commitment)**
- **4242 Road Safety**
- **4089 Car Park resurfacing (Village Centre)**
- **5011 Personnel reserve**

Cllr Bussell went through each proposed new expenditure code and the reasoning behind each. After some discussion it was agreed to use only the following new codes:

- **4066 Ashdown Forest Conservators grant (2-year commitment)**
- **4089 Car Park resurfacing (Village Centre)**

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159. Budget 2018/19: To consider the draft budget for the new financial year and make recommendation to the Village Council

Cllr Bussell said that following the October meeting, Cllr Bright, the Clerk and herself had met to prepare a draft budget. The two largest items were:

- Village Centre car park resurfacing project (4089). The 2017/18 budget had allowed £7k in the reserves for Council office and facilities (5007). £6k had been moved in to budgeted expenditure with a further £3k added; total allowed £9k. This project would be a shared cost with the Village Centre trustees
- Staffing (4000). £35,200 which allowed for £33.5k actual salaries, £1,679 would allowed for 100 hours overtime (events) and unexpected issues. She added, that although it had been previously suggested that the overtime hours should be allocated to a separate events budget code, this was not a straightforward process and the this figure could easily be extracted from the timesheets.

Members discussed at length the staffing budget and that they would still prefer to see the budget have a separate expenditure code for the events overtime hours. Cllr Bright said that whilst he initially agreed with this, some of the events hours occurred in the core hours and also when looking at the accounting and the payroll procedures this would over complicate the process. He added that the timesheets recorded the events hours and therefore, an amount could be extracted and reported in the annual report for residents. Discussions included suggesting no overtime and having fixed hours only; time in lieu instead of overtime; clarity over events hours and overtime. Whilst some members were disgruntled over the recording of salary expenditure, members **agreed** to leave the budget for code 4000 at £35,200.

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Members then went through the budget and considered each budget code, and **agreed to make the following recommendations for the budget 2018/19 to the full Council:**

- Expenditure £85,014
- Income £78,890
- Reserves for specific expenditure £12,400
- General carried forward reserves £31,291

The Committee then discussed the precept (1076). It was expected that West Sussex County Council would continue to increase its council tax by 4% and Mid Sussex District Council by 2%. The Committee were keen to minimise any increase, but agreed that there should be an increase as costs were increasing and

Clerk

it was wanted to support the car park resurfacing. After some discussion, it was **agreed to recommend a precept increase of 2.21% from £64,575 to £66,000.** On a band D property this would be a £1.92 increase per year or 0.16p per month; it was noted that the tax base figures were yet to be confirmed.

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

To review the overtime allowance for 2017/18

To consider reviewing the internal auditor arrangements

161. **Date of Next Meeting** – Tuesday 16th January 2018

Meeting was closed at 21:11

Chairman.....

Date.....