

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ASHURST WOOD FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE MEETING held on Tuesday 13th October 2020, 7.30 pm via Zoom.

PRESENT: Cllrs:Phillips (Chairman), Draper, Forbes, Haite, Spoor and Tyrell

IN ATTENDANCE: Samantha Booker (Responsible Finance Officer (RFO))

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 0

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

1. **Public Questions – None**
2. **Apologies for absence – None**
3. **To receive Declaration of Interests from Members in respect of any matter on the Agenda – None**
4. **To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held 21st January 2020**
The minutes were approved as an accurate account of the meeting.
5. **To confirm the members of the Committee –** It was confirmed that there were no changes to the Committee.
6. **Clerk’s Report –** The Clerk’s report was received.
7. **Audit -** It was noted that the External Audit report was delayed due to COVID-19. It is expected to arrive at the end of November. It was also noted that the Internal Auditor could foresee no problems with the audit.
It was agreed that the Audit would be discussed at the next meeting.
8. **Budget 2020/21 –** The budget and review of predicted year end figures were discussed in full, and the following points were agreed
 - 8.1. Staffing (4000) – Salary increases were not fully included in the budget. Predicted end of year raised to £35,000.
 - 8.2. Training (4010) – It was noted that the training budget would cover Word Press training for the Clerk and Assistant Clerk (see items 10/11).
 - 8.3. Subscriptions (4026) – RFO to check all subscriptions have been paid and if so amend the predicted year end figure.
 - 8.4. Website & Publicity (4027) – In order to cover any work on web site accessibility the predicted year end would be amended to £1,000.
 - 8.5. Election Costs (4030)- RFO to investigate if we have received / paid a bill for April 2019 election and then if necessary amend the predicted end of year accordingly.
 - 8.6. Youth Club Wages (4040) – The Council has agreed to pay the salaries of the two staff until the end of 2020 and to then review the ongoing situation. When the budget was set it assumed the Council would have to pay both Pension and National Insurance contributions. The actual status is that only one has opted for the Pension and only one is eligible for National Insurance. Hence the actual costs have been lower than the budget. However, the new pay scales have still to be received and this will require back dating of the increases.
 - 8.7. Burial Fees (4059) – We are awaiting the invoice from Forest Row Council. SB to chase in the January 2021

- 8.8. Ashdown Forest Conservators Grant (4066) – SB to chase in January 2021
 - 8.9. Village Centre Purchase (4090) – The council’s final payment was in July 2019 so the line item will drop out of the financial tables for 2021/2022
 - 8.10. Street Lighting (4200/4250) – This has now been paid for this financial year.
 - 8.11. Garden & Property Maintenance (4210) – Predicted year end to be reduced to £500.
 - 8.12. Civic Amenity Collection (4211) – Due to the cancellation of this service, the present actual will now be the end of year figure.
 - 8.13. Ashstock (3000) – As the event has had to be cancelled, the predicted year end will be just the present £70 amount (the license).
 - 8.14. Christmas Market (1046) – As the event has had to be cancelled, the income predicted will be £0.
9. **Annual Review of Financial Risk Assessment** – This will be carried out by Cllrs Phillips and Forbes.
10. **To review cost and suppliers of internet services (considered together with item 11)**
11. **Review compliance and agree actions with regard to Web accessibility (including item 10)**
 – The Council have contracted for internet and telephone with British Telecom for two years. The Clerk and RFO are booked on a Word Press one day training session in November, but Cllr Forbes suggests it would be beneficial for them to undertake more training in web design and accessibility. Cllr Phillips suggested we find out how many people visit each page of the website on a monthly/yearly basis. It was suggested that either Derek Wailes or Easy Space themselves might be able to assist us with this. Cllr Forbes has reviewed the Council’s web site and suggested simple checks on documents to make them “accessible” before loading. There are other items that do not meet the “accessibility” criteria. A note has been added to the web site to contact the Clerk to get a hard copy if required. Cllr Phillips pointed out that while agreeing with the principles, we needed to be realistic with regard to funding and effort needed, and if necessary find other ways to provide information for those experiencing “accessibility” difficulties. It was agreed that this needed to be an on-going investigation.
12. **Allotment budget and funding** – The cost of fencing has increased as the family which are leasing the land want there to be a small community space available for people to meet. Therefore, a larger area needs to be fenced. From enquiring with our solicitors a budgetary figure for legal fees would be more like £1,500. The entire project is now estimated at approximately £12,000. It was suggested that we try to source a grant of £6,000 and match it with Council funding (a figure of £4,000 was included in Project reserves for this year). Leasing of allotments and grant provisions are often based on 7 year increments, the number of increments being determined by the grant size. It was suggested that the Council initially considers that a minimum of 14 years may be required for grants.
13. **Any other items for reporting or inclusion on future agenda** – The maintenance of Dors Patch, the War Memorial and the garden in front of the Council Office was raised. It was agreed that if a volunteer could not be found it may be worth looking at hiring a gardener. Mrs Bussell will be consulted to ascertain how long she and her husband had been spending dealing with these areas on a monthly basis. If a gardener is needed, the costs of this must be investigated and included in the 2021/2022 budget.
14. **Date of next meeting** – Tuesday 17th November (pre-budget meeting)

The meeting closed at 8.40pm

Chairman.....

Date.....