

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the **Parish Council** held on 10th December 2019
at 7.30pm in the Parish Centre, Adastra Park, Hassocks.

Attendees: Parish Councillors Ian Weir (Chair) ,Jane Baker, Peter Gibbons, Leslie Campbell, Frances Gaudencio, Sue Hatton, Bill Hatton, David Hammond and Kristian Berggreen.

Parish Clerk: Ian Cumberworth

Visiting Member(s): none

MINUTES

PC19/108 APOLOGIES

Cllrs Kate Bailey, Alex Simmons, Bob Brewer, Georgia Cheshire, Frank Rylance and Nick Owens

Visiting Members: County Councillor Kirsty Lord.

PC19/109 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Disclosure by Councillors of personal interests in matters on the agenda, and whether the Councillor regards their interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.

None

PC19/110 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 12th November 2019 were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

PC19/111 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was one member of the public present who observed proceedings but did not wish to speak.

PC19/112 MINUTES

To accept the following Minutes.

To note the minutes of the Planning Committee for 25th November 2019.

To note the minutes of Policy Resources & Communications Committee 19th November 2019 and the Grounds and Environment Committee 28th November 2019.

PC19/113 FINANCE

The Finance report and payments totalling £26,142.11 for the period ending 31st October 2019 were approved.

PC19/114 Reports

- 114.1 **District Councillors reports:** - Cllr Sue Hatton (SH) informed members that due to the election (purdah) things had been relatively quiet however she has been appointed to sit on two working parties at MSDC in respect of District wide Parking and Member Development.

Cllr (S) Hatton also drew Member's attention to the Strategic Site North of Clayton Mills outline planning application which is to be considered by the District Planning Committee on 17th December 2019.

- 114.2 **County Councillor** – In Cllr Lords absence she had submitted a brief report which the Clerk introduced.

Cllr Lord indicated that the proposed winter gritting changes in Hassocks reducing the areas to be gritted (Grand Avenue/Dale Avenue) had been reversed and the service will be aligned to last year's arrangements.

County have now received the Commissioners report from the Department for Education setting out recommendations which after purdah are likely to be published.

Hassocks Parish Councils parking scheme was approved at the County Local Committee on 12th December and we are now awaiting notification of an implementation date.

KL indicated that she had been requested to raise concerns regarding the newly installed footpath in respect of how slippery it becomes during light frosts. This matter is to be taken up with highways. In addition KL proposes to raise the issue of lighting in Keymer Road to see if it's possible for County to provide any improvements to the street lighting.

KL confirmed that a temporary bus stop was being provided to the north of Saxon Mills whilst the Stonepound bus stop was closed.

KL also sought feedback from Members on the new lights at Stonepound Crossroads and would appreciate member's comments. Members expressed a number of views most of which were not complimentary which included:

- The left hand filter lane on the Hurst side had made the situation worse and since the road has been resurfaced vehicles are simply mounting the kerb to access the filter lane.
- Wasted opportunity and poor design
- Traffic queuing has increased and concern was expressed on the impact that the new lights relating to the pedestrian crossing being installed near Saxon Mills will have due to their close proximity.

- 114.3 **Rail matters** –In November there were 228 trains in total cancelled of which 146 never ran or passed through Hassocks while the remaining 82 trains scheduled to stop at Hassocks but failed to do so.

From the 1st January 2019 to 30th November 2019 2,419 trains have been cancelled of which 1,713 never ran or passed through Hassocks whilst 706 ran but failed to stop at Hassocks.

- 114.4 **Youth Initiatives** - Cllr Gaudencio and Cllr Hammond indicated they were looking to establish a youth committee and constructive preliminary discussions have been held with various organisations including Mid Sussex Voluntary Association, Clarion Housing, and Sussex Youth Clubs. The group will not be affiliated to the Parish Council but once properly constituted may seek to work with the Parish Council to support the initiative.

Cllr Gaudencio advised that by establishing a formal committee it will enable the group to access external funding streams.

- 114.5 **Police matters** – no report received.

- 114.6 **Report from Councillors on meetings of outside bodies where the Council is represented** - Cllr Frances informed members that she recently attended a meeting organised by Transport South East which is a group comprising of mainly District and County Councils with a few Parish Councils. The vision of the group is to grow the South East's economy by delivering an integrated transport system. The group has aspirations to become a statutory body but by joining together many organisations it is anticipated this will enable a more co-ordinated/joined up approach to transport strategy and linking transport solutions together within the region. Cllr Gaudencio encouraged the parish to consider attending future meetings

PC19/115 CHAIRMANS REPORT –. Nothing to report.

PC19/116 CLERK'S REPORT –

- 116.1 **Budget Proposal 2020/21**

The Clerk introduced the report setting out the budget options for 2020/21. Members were advised that for illustrative purposes the proposed budget had been drafted assuming that no precept increase was to be applied for the forthcoming year. Therefore the budget represented the funds required to cover the day to day operational costs of the Council.

Members were informed that at the time of drafting the report it was estimated that the property tax base was 3,451 properties, subsequently we have been advised by Mid Sussex District Council that the actual figure should in fact be 3,468. Therefore the effect of this means that the parishes council tax element to be collected is spread over more properties which if the precept remained unchanged would result in properties paying less council tax than they currently pay in respect of the (parish element only)

Therefore by adjusting the figures set out in section 2 of the report 'Summary of budget information' to reflect this would result in an amended band D equivalent property paying £80.90 per annum for the parish council element.

The Clerk indicated that based on the proposed budget after taking into account the projected income and expenditure this would return a small surplus of £4,070 for the year 2020/21.

The Clerk drew Members attention to section 3 of the report which set out a summary of projected income and expenditure budget proposal for (2020/21) together with the projected budget outturn for the current financial year.

The Clerk then referred members to the table on pages 6 and 7 of the report which provided some narrative regarding some of the larger variances/rationale behind the budget proposals. The Clerk then took Members through each of the notes in turn and took questions on some of the assumptions proposals being made. Members were advised that although some savings had been achieved within the Staff costs budget this year as a result of the Council carrying a vacancy the Clerk indicated he would like to retain the budget based on the full establishment to allow the Council flexibility in the next financial year to fill that post or similar if necessary. Members were comfortable with this approach. Some members queried the level of budget allocated towards twinning, however members were assured by the Chair that any funds drawn down from this budget would be required to be supported via detailed financial information to release any of these funds. Members were also advised that by setting the budget at this level this did not necessarily mean that the full allocation would be automatically awarded to support the initiative.

Members were advised that the Council should consider allocating funding for street tree planting within the Environmental improvements cost centre. Having liaised with the tree planting co-ordinator the proposed budget allocation of £3,600 was recommended. Members indicated they were content with this approach.

Members were then taken through the reserves position of the Council set out on page 5 of the report which detailed the impact of the budget on the Councils reserves. Members were advised that based on the projected earmarked reserves expenditure reserves would reduce from £217,122 down to £97,122 by the end of 2020/21 if Members chose not to allocate further funds to the Councils priorities.

The Clerk advised Members that in light of the increase in tax base and the expected level of Earmarked Reserves expenditure in 2020/21 members may wish to consider allocating further funds to Earmarked reserves to continue to support existing and emerging priorities of the Council.

The Clerk indicated that if members were minded to do this further work would be required on the business plan to clarify the timeline for some of the priorities.

On page 8 of this report the position on Earmarked reserves is summarised detailing the expected position at the end of this financial year together with details of the areas to be funded.

Finally the Clerk brought Members attention to a sample of spreadsheets that had been produced to illustrate the impact on precept in the event of each £2,500 incremental increase to the parish precept figure.

Having considered the report in detail and discussing various options there was a consensus amongst members that the Council consider making a modest contribution towards earmarked reserves. The view was also expressed for the need to revisit some of the priorities identified in the New Year to review their prioritisation.

After careful consideration Members **RESOLVED** to increase the precept by £15,000 to £295,545 which will increase a band D equivalent property from £82.85 per annum to £85.22 per annum which represents a 2.73% increase. (8 members voted in favour and 1 member abstained).

116.2 **IT Operating System Windows upgrade.**

Members were advised that the Parish Council currently runs 3 of its PC's using windows 7 operating system which will no longer be supported by Microsoft at some point in January. The Council has been advised by one of its main software providers that they will no longer be able to support their product on Windows 7 beyond this point therefore the Council will be required to move over to Windows 10.

In consultation with the Councils IT support providers they indicated there are 2 options:

- Utilise existing equipment - upgrade costs £1,255.51 (net) or to upgrade/replace existing kit £2,611.35.(net)

Of the 3 machines affected one is a spare and assigned to the vacant post therefore is rarely used. Without the need to upgrade the operating system at this time it is unlikely that the Council would have been looking to replace equipment at this point as they remain sufficient in terms of capacity/functionality and speed for the processing needs of the Council.

Member's views were sought. After consideration Members **RESOLVED** to approve the upgrading of the existing kit in the sum of £1,255.51 (net)

116.3 **Grant funding awarded by Hassocks Parish Council.**

Members were asked to note that expressions of thanks had been received from both the Woodland, Flora & Fauna group and the Monday group for the grant monies recently provided by the Council.

PC19/117 URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN for noting and/or inclusion on a future agenda.

There were none.

PC19/118 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the date of the next Council meeting is **Tuesday 7th January 2020 at 7.30pm.**

DRAFT