

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **POLICY, RESOURCES and COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE** meeting held on **Thursday 23 January 2020 at 7.30 pm**

Attendees: Parish Councillors: Frances Gaudencio (Chair), Frank Rylance and Peter Gibbons.

Visiting members: None

Clerk: Ian Cumberworth

PRC19/56 APOLOGIES: Georgia Cheshire, Kate Bailey, Ian Weir and Sue Hatton.

Absent without apologies: Cllrs David Hammond

PRC19/57 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS: Cllr Frances Gaudencio in relation to item 19/41.6

PRC19/58 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 November 2019 as previously circulated were accepted.

PRC19/59 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

There were no members of the public present.

PRC19/60 CLERKS REPORT

19/60.1 Information Technology – Email system

The Clerk updated Members with regard to the new email system and indicated that it is likely to be rolled out in the next few weeks. At this point Members will receive a new secure email account/address therefore it is important that Members use this account for their primary communication between Members regarding Council business.

The Clerk confirmed that this system will operate via any internet provider and guidance notes and support if needed will be provided to support Members in setting up these accounts. Members noted the actions.

19/60.2 Information Technology – Website

Members were advised that various works and testing had now been completed on the Councils website and we are able to confirm that the Councils website now meets the compliance standards required in accordance with the Public sector bodies (Website & Mobile applications (no 2) accessibility regulations. It is proposed that periodic testing will continue on the website to ensure that the website remains compliant when new content is added.

At the same time work was undertaken to ensure that the Councils website was mobile friendly. Members were advised that if they were to now view the website via a mobile device they should see for themselves a significant improvement.

19/60.3 Bank Account - Signatories.

The Clerk informed Members that the Council currently has a pool of four signatories, two of which are required to sign/authorise payments at any one time. Due to the availability of members at present it is likely to become more difficult to secure member availability at short notice to authorise payments.

In accordance with Financial Regulations (5.1) authority is sought to increase the pool of signatories to authorise payments to provide additional resilience within the process. It is suggested that a further two signatories are approved.

The Clerk indicated that he had spoken to some Members about the possibility of becoming authorised signatories and two potential candidates indicated that they would be happy to fulfil this role: Cllr Frances Gaudencio and Cllr Jane Baker.

Members therefore **RESOLVED** to approve the addition of two signatories to the pool of bank signatories and agreed that Cllr Frances Gaudencio and Cllr Jane Baker be approved for this role.

The Clerk undertook to progress the necessary mandates with the bank to effect this proposal.

19/60.4 Interim Internal Audit Report

Members were advised that the Council had recently been subject to an interim internal audit and the Council had now received the report. There were no specific recommendations however the summary of the auditor's opinion stated

'It is our opinion that the systems and internal procedures at Hassocks Parish Council are well established and followed. The Clerk is experienced and ensures the council follows best practice regulations and has overseen changes to the internal procedures as regulations and technologies have changed to maintain compliance. It is clear the council takes governance, policies and procedures very seriously and I am pleased to report that overall the systems and procedures you have in place are fit for purpose.'

If Members would like to view the complete report they were advised this could be viewed in the Clerk's office.

Members noted the report and thanked the Clerk and his team's effort to obtain a positive report.

19/60.5 Communication

The Clerk informed Members that one press release has recently been signed off and agreed since the last PR & C meeting in accordance with the Council's Communication protocol which will be published in the February edition of 'Hassocks Life'. The item relates to Hassocks forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan Referendum on Thursday the 5th March 2020.

The article will appear with other Council information in the publication. Members were advised that the Council is required to ensure that under The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendum) Regulations 2012 it complies with The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity which provides guidance that any publicity should be objective and even handed and in general terms seek not to influence voters. Therefore the Council would not be permitted to run a yes /no publicity campaign.

Members viewed the draft release and liked the presentation style but requested a minor modification to last paragraph in the draft release. The Clerk undertook to amend the final document.

19/60.6 Youth Initiative Projects

Cllr Gaudencio introduced this item and updated Members on the progress of the group that they were looking to set up 'Hassocks Youth Projects'. At present the group were exploring various structures including sitting under the umbrella of an existing charity and examining various ways the group could access funding including via the Parish Council. It was confirmed that although the initial group has two representatives that happen to be Councillors this initiative is being undertaken by themselves as individuals and not representatives of the Parish Council.

The Clerk sought clarification from Cllr Gaudencio whether either Councillor would hold a formal position on the proposed entity and could be involved in applying for funds from the Parish Council. Cllr Gaudencio confirmed that when the group was set up it was possible that she would hold a formal role on the board.

At this point to air on the side of caution *Cllr Gaudencio declared a potential non pecuniary interest in the event of the group being established and her fulfilling a role on the board which was duly noted.*

Cllr Gaudencio provided some further background as to how the group anticipated things progressing and discussed the option in principle of securing some funding from the Parish Council. The Clerk informed Members that this could be possible as funding had been set aside to support youth initiatives as part of the Councils business plan but would need to be supported via a clear proposal.

Cllr Gaudencio emphasised that the youth provision would be delivered by others and the role of the proposed group is very much one of a facilitator/enabler.

Members welcomed the developments and requested that once proposals are more fully developed that further details be brought back to Committee to see whether the Council would be in a position to provide funding to support this and potentially other youth initiatives.

PRC19/61 Urgent Matters. There were no urgent matters.

PRC19/62 DATE OF NEXT MEETING. 18 February 2020

PRC19/63 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS In view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted Councillors will be referred to the confidential agenda. If any members of the public or press are present they will be requested to withdraw from the meeting.

CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS

PRC19/64 The Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 November 2019 as previously circulated were accepted

PRC19/65 STAFFING MATTERS

Members were advised that the closure of the office on Wednesdays had proved useful to allow various work streams to be progressed. This arrangement is proposed to be reviewed formally by this committee at a future point.

Members were informed that the key work streams being worked on at present related to the Neighbourhood plan and the Play equipment tenders.