



POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Radstock Lane, Earley, Berkshire on Wednesday, 20th November 2019 commencing at 7pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor C Jones.

Councillors A Bassett, D Chopping, J Clark, J Eastwell, D Hare, R Houlbrooke, S Matthews, A Mickleburgh and P Stothart.

In attendance Jo Friend (Town Clerk), Emma Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk), J Friend (Senior Operations Support Officer) and Councillor G Littler.

The first twenty minutes of the meeting were set aside for members of the public to pose questions to the Council. There were no members of the public present.

46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

48. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 18th September 2019 were confirmed a true record and signed by the Chairman.

49. SULV JOINT WORKING GROUP

The Committee was updated by the Town Clerk on the findings report prepared by JM Spurling Planning Consultants Limited as to whether it would be possible, and preferable, to have Bulmershe designated as Local Green Space (LGS) or whether the existing protection afforded by the policy relating to SULVs is sufficient.

The Planning Consultant's report, discussed at the Planning Committee Meeting on 12th November 2019, identified five key criteria which need to be satisfied for designation of land as LGS. Of these five criteria, the area of land satisfies at least four of the criteria and there are strong arguments to be put forward in the case of the fifth.

Councillor Matthews confirmed that she would be trying to arrange a SULV Joint Working Group meeting with Woodley Town Council to discuss submission of a request for change of status to Wokingham Borough Council before the proposed Local Plan is published. At its next meeting, Full Council will be asked to approve a request that power be delegated to the Planning Committee to approve any such submission to Wokingham Borough Council. The Town Clerk to circulate the full report to all Councillors in advance of this meeting.



50. FINANCE

50.1 Internal Audit

The Committee discussed the Interim report on the internal audit for the year ended 31st March 2020 noting that the Town Clerk had since reviewed the VAT Codes as listed under Section B and a revised system of cemetery invoicing has been introduced as highlighted under Section E.

The Chairman requested that future interim reports are forwarded to the Leader and Chairman of the Council upon receipt.

50.2 Bank Reconciliations

The Committee noted that the September 2019 and October 2019 Bank Reconciliations had been provided to the Chair of Policy & Resources for information.

Councillor Bassett entered meeting.

50.3 Financial Report

The Committee noted the financial report as at 30th September 2019, as produced by the Town Council's Financial Advisor.

The Senior Operations Support Officer advised the Committee that the August and September payroll figures were not reflected in the report, as such the current staffing cost underspend was circa £42k. The Town Clerk advised that the Senior Operations Support Officer is currently working on a breakdown of salary expenditure for each area of operations but an underspend is likely in most areas.

The Chair asked for it to be noted that as the previous Finance Manager had not loaded the 2019/20 Budget onto the finance package, there had been difficulties in budget reporting this financial year.

The Town Clerk advised that the new financial software, RBS, is scheduled to be installed in January 2020, this will provide improved finance reporting functions.

The Town Clerk advised that the Facilities Manager would provide an up to date report on capital expenditure, including proposed works to the flat roof of Radstock House, to the Budget Working Party.

51. ESTIMATES

51.1 Financial Year 2020/21

The Committee discussed any major projects they would wish to undertake in the 2020/21 financial year, to ensure adequate provision is made in the estimates for that period.

On behalf of the Youth Working Party, Councillor Clark proposed that £20K is allocated in the 2020/2021 budget for Youth Services and an additional £5K is earmarked annually for additional youth provisions. This would facilitate an increase in Youth Worker hours and possibly the recruitment of a Streetworker, the aim being to improve the Town Council's



youth services and to widen the reach of youth provision within Earley. The Committee supported Councillor Clark's proposal which will be taken forward to the Budget Working Party.

Future consideration will also be given to the possibility of volunteers working alongside Youth Workers and a suggestion was made that Reading University could be approached for volunteers.

51.2 Budget Working Party

The Committee agreed that the Budget Working Party should consist of all those members of the Policy & Resources Committee who wished to attend, plus any other Town Councillor interested in attending the meetings.

Councillors discussed convening a meeting of the Budget Working Party, prior to the Policy and Resources meeting in January, to consider the requests from the Council's Standing Committees and to formulate a 2020/21 budget proposal for the Policy and Resources Committee to recommend to Council for approval at its meeting on 19th February 2020.

It was agreed that the Budget Working Party meetings would take place on Tuesday, 17th December 2019 and Wednesday, 8th January 2020 both commencing at 7.00pm. The Town Clerk to notify all Councillors of the dates and invite them to attend.

The Committee discussed the potential for community consultation on capital expenditure projects as part of future budget setting. It was agreed this would be discussed further at the Policy & Resources meeting on 25th March 2020.

Councillor Littler entered meeting.

52. **GRANTS**

Councillor Mickleburgh presented the draft Earley Town Council Grants Policy.

The Committee agreed that successful applicants will receive their funding after 1st May annually and that the proposed Policy be updated with the date of adoption and date of annual review.

The Committee agreed that applications received from Individuals will only be processed as match funding requests through Wokingham Borough Council and other recognised organisations.

To inform their budget setting discussions, Councillors asked for information on the Town Council's grants budgets for previous years to be provided. The Town Clerk to action.

53. **REQUESTS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

53.1 Citizens Advice Wokingham

The Committee discussed the request from Citizens Advice Wokingham for Earley Town Council and Woodley Town Council to increase the level of financial support to enable the CAB office in Woodley to extend its opening hours.



It was agreed that CAB Wokingham be asked to submit a request via the Town Council's Grant Application form in order that further information could be provided and the funding request could be considered in the 2020/2021 financial year under the new Grants Policy.

53.2 Wokingham Sports Sponsorship Fund

The Committee discussed the request from the Wokingham Sports Sponsorship Fund for match funding for three young Earley residents who are excelling in their particular sports. It was

RESOLVED that, in accordance with the provisions of the General Power of Competence, as adopted by this Council, a match funding contribution of £200 for each of the three athletes be made to the Wokingham Sports Sponsorship Fund.

54. SERVICE TO EARLEY AWARDS

Councillor Mickleburgh presented the draft terms of reference document and expressed thanks to all those involved in the review process

The Committee requested the phrase "the successful nominee" be amended to read "the successful nominee(s)". It was

RESOLVED that, subject to the above amendment, the document be put forward to Full Council for adoption.

55. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

The Committee noted details of Orders for Payment since the last meeting of the Town Council (Vouchers 2540 – 2541, 2542 – 2575, 2576 – 2614, 2615 – 2647 and 2648 - 2649 and Imprest Account (Vouchers 371 - 395)

56. PUBLICATIONS

No publications had been received

57. PRESS RELEASES

The Committee requested a press release regarding the new Grants Policy application process to be released once the Council is out of purdah, after 12th December 2019.

58. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

There were no members of the public or press present. It was agreed that the remaining items on the Agenda be taken under Part II.



PART II

59. **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

60. **CONTRACTS**

61. **FORMER TOWN CLERK**

62. **TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 9.07 pm.

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Chairman