



POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held remotely on Wednesday 11th November 2020 commencing at 7pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor C Jones

Councillors A Bassett, J Clark, J Eastwell, D Hare, R Houlbrooke, T Maher, S Matthews, and A Mickleburgh.

In attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk), E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk) and R Fryer (Democratic Services Officer).

57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Chopping.

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

59. PUBLIC FORUM

No members of the public were present.

60. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 16th September 2020 were confirmed a true record and signed by the Chairman.

61. COVID-19 - UPDATE

61.1 Help Shop

Members noted that, in accordance with the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 4) Regulations 2020, the Town Council Helpshop would be closed to visitors in person from 5th November 2020. Officers would continue to be available to assist residents and answer queries by email and telephone.

Councillors T Maher and D Hare entered the meeting.

61.2 Football

Councillors noted that adult and junior football bookings had been cancelled with effect from 5th November 2020, and that the position would be reviewed as and when government guidance was amended.



61.3 Community Centres

It was noted that, as a result of lockdown, the hiring of all the Town Council's community centres had been cancelled with effect from 5th November 2020. Exceptions had been made for the two pre-schools operating at Maiden Place CC and Silverdale as registered early years settings are permitted to operate during lockdown.

62. FINANCE

62.1 Budget Update

Members noted that Councillor Jones and the Town Clerk had held an initial discussion regarding the Town Council's financial position and the budget for 2021/22. All Councillors were invited to attend the meetings of the Budget Working Party, and dates would be circulated in the next few days.

62.1.1 Councillors were reminded that the financial impact of the Coronavirus pandemic had been substantial and that the Town Council's non-precept income had fallen dramatically.

62.1.2 Consideration was given, as part of the budget development process, as to whether there were any projects that the Committee would wish to undertake in the 2021/22 financial year. Members had noted their desire to involve the public in this process, but were aware that such engagement required a developed communication strategy and an informed financial position, which were not possible in the current Covid climate.

Projects suggested by Members included expanding the Youth Project; updating the Council website; noticeboards; Earley in Bloom; hanging baskets; benches; increased Officer numbers; Radstock Social Club project, and the creation of a fund for the proposed Climate Emergency group.

62.1.3 Members were of the opinion that prioritisation should be left to the Budget Working Party.

62.1.4 Councillors considered future projects for the following financial year, 2022/23, as part of the Council's long-term financial planning, and supported the suggestion that earmarked reserves be created for items such as the replacement of play equipment, the planting of a woodland area and for climate emergency measures. There was a brief discussion around the Events Field and, as this is a borough council asset, it was suggested that borough councillors should follow up any ideas for improvements with WBC.

62.2 Budget Update

The Town Clerk reported on the recommendations made by the Amenities & Leisure Committee at its meeting on 4th November 2020 - no increase to hall hire charges for 2021/22; an inflationary increase to cemetery fees (subsequent to a comparison exercise with other burial authorities); and the cessation of the provision of free dog waste bags to residents for a trial period of one year. The Committee discussed the recommendations and held indicative votes on the three recommendations.

62.2.1 It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendation for no increase in hall hire charges for 2021/22 be accepted.



62.2.2 It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendation to increase cemetery charges in line with inflation be accepted.

62.2.3 It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendation to cease provision of free dog waste bags for a trial period of one year would not be accepted. Some councillors were of the view that this service resulted in non-dog owners subsidising dog owners and so opposed the continuation of supplying free bags. Other councillors were of the opinion that the service sent a positive message to residents and were keen for it to continue. A vote was taken and a majority were in favour of continuing with the provision of free dog waste bags to residents.

62.3 Bank Reconciliations

It was noted that the Bank Reconciliations for August and September 2020 had been provided to the Chair of Policy & Resources for information.

63. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

63.1 Receipts

Members noted the receipt of CIL funds of £19,252.37

63.2 Co-Funding Project Proposals

Consideration was given to the request from Wokingham Borough Council that the Town Council use CIL money to fund or co-fund two Highways projects. After discussion, the Committee agreed to reject the request from WBC. Whilst councillors were of the opinion that they were good projects, they felt that the Town Council, which receives little by way of CIL funding, already had CIL funds committed to WBC proposals and that these latest requests were of the kind that should be funded by the Borough.

64. TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS

64.1 Grants Policy

Members considered the Town Clerk's recommendation that, in light of the current uncertainty surrounding the scale of the financial impact of the pandemic, the Town Council's grant awarding process be put back a short period of time to enable applicants to gain a clearer idea of need and to give time for the Town Council to review its Grants budget for 2021/2022.

It was **AGREED** that the Town Council's grant awarding process be put back as per the Town Clerk's recommendation and that this information would be placed on the Town Council website.

64.2 Wokingham Sports Sponsorship Fund

Members considered Wokingham Borough Council's request that the Town Council match fund the successful Earley applicants to its Sports Sponsorship Fund. To match fund all three young sports people would cost £750 and would require the existing grants budget to be exceeded by £325.



It was **RESOLVED** that Earley Town Council match fund the three successful Earley applicants to the Wokingham Borough Council's Sports Sponsorship Fund and that general reserve funds be used to meet the £325 shortfall in the grants budget.

65. TOWN COUNCIL POLICIES

65.1 Councillors noted that officers were in the process of reviewing the Council's policies and that draft policies would be drawn up for consideration and approval by the Policy & Resources Committee. Approved policies would then be referred to Full Council for formal adoption. Members noted that, during this process, guidance is sought from bodies such as SLCC and NALC.

65.2 Members considered the following policies for recommendation to Full Council for adoption:

65.2.1 Time off in Lieu (TOIL) Policy

It was **RESOLVED** that the Time off in Lieu (TOIL) Policy be recommended to Full Council for adoption.

65.2.2 Whistleblowing Policy

It was **RESOLVED** that the Whistleblowing Policy be recommended to Full Council for adoption.

66. CODE OF CONDUCT CONSULTATION

Members considered the consultation being carried out by Wokingham Borough Council on the Code of Conduct for Elected Councillors. Councillors noted that the Town Council currently adopted the Borough's Code of Conduct for its Members so that any amendments may affect the Town Council.

Members **RESOLVED** to create a working group to write and submit a response to the consultation. Membership of the working group to comprise of Councillors C Jones, D Hare, R Houlbrooke, S Matthews and one member of the Town Council's Conservative group.

67. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors received details of Orders for Payment made since the last meeting of the Town Council (Vouchers 3468 – 3495, 3496 - 3499) and Imprest Account (Vouchers 526-530).

68. PUBLICATIONS

It was noted that the following communications had been received and were available for perusal from the Council Offices:

Earley Neighbourhood Action Group	Electronic Minutes – 19 th October 2020
Me2 Club	Electronic newsletter – October 2020



69. **PRESS RELEASES**

No press releases were requested.

70. **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

71. **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

72. **RADSTOCK SOCIAL CLUB**

73. **CENTREPOINT HIRER – AFTER SCHOOL CLUB**

74. **OUTSTANDING FEES**

75. **STAFF MATTERS**

76. **TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 9.37 pm.

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Chair, Policy & Resources Committee