



Local Government for Langton Green, Speldhurst, Ashurst and Old Groombridge

Minutes of a Finance Committee Meeting held on Monday 30th November 2020 at 7.30pm conducted online via zoom electronic communication

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Mrs Lyle (Chairman), Mrs Soyke, Mrs Woodliffe, Ellery, Rowe, Rajah and Barrington-Johnson (ex-officio)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

OFFICERS PRESENT

C May – Clerk and Mrs K Harman – Assistant Clerk

1. To enquire if anyone present intends to record the meeting:

No-one present intended to record the meeting.

2. To receive and approve apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Scarbrough due to a possible conflict of interest with his employer.

3. Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

4. Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

5. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting dated 19th October 2020, copies having previously been forwarded to Members, be approved and signed as a correct record.

6. Public Open Session

There were no members of the public present.

7. Interim Payments

These are payments made during the month that were not approved at the last Full Council Meeting.

Unity Bank: £365.65 transfer to credit card and £9 charges on Mastercard.

8. Financial Position as of November 2020 and review of expenditure vs budget to-date

Summary sheets and detailed reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was noted that the budget figures included the pavilion income and expenditure and that any queries regarding the budget would be raised during the precept discussions – item 16.

9. Financial position as of November 2020 and review of expenditure for Pavilion to-date

Summary sheets and detailed reports had been circulated prior to the meeting which were considered in detail. Cllr Mrs Lyle noted that pavilion income during the year was disappointing however it was hoped that the Business Rate Support Grant would enable the pavilion to remain in credit by a small margin at year-end and any balance would be transferred to the RRIM account.

10. Budget Virements

There were none.

11. Banking and reserves

The Clerk reported that accounts were now all under FSCS guidelines of £85k and that the work on the mandates was progressing.

12. Committee and Working Group expenditure

- a) Landscape Services had completed the repairs by the pavilion and the invoice totalling £3,500 would be paid from the pavilion maintenance budget and offset by the Business Rate Support Grant income.
- b) The Clerk reported that a large infestation of rats had been reported by the Groundsman in the LGRG carpark recycling bins. Two quotes had been obtained and due to the health and safety nature of the situation, the cheaper operative had been employed under delegated authority to act immediately at a cost of £400. A further £225 plus the cost of a skip had been agreed for the operative to clear the detritus with the Groundsman's help.

13. Grant requests

- a) **RESOLVED** to approve a grant to Porchlight for £600 with the proviso that the donation is spent within the borough of Tunbridge Wells.
- b) **RESOLVED** to approve a grant to the Citizens Advice Bureau, Tunbridge Wells, for £1,000.
- c) **RESOLVED** not to support the National Search and Rescue Dog Association (NSARDA).
- d) **RESOLVED** to approve a grant to West Kent Mediation for £350.

14. Staff and Training

There was nothing to report.

15. To Update the committee on the new electricity contract for the pavilion

The Clerk advised councillors that the two-year electricity contract with EDF had come to an end and on review and using a utility search company, it was found EDF was still the best value. On that basis, the Clerk had renewed the two-year contract.

16. The Precept 2021-22

The Clerk had updated the budget documents with the amendments agreed at the Finance Committee meeting in October. There was some discussion on the pavilion and that the budget showed a deficit next year. It was noted that it was a very cautious budget, especially on the income side due to the pandemic. Any shortfall would in the first instance come from the RRIM account. The Clerk explained how this year the tax base would impact residents' council tax and the effect this would have on the percentage increase figures. In the light of the difficult times many parishioners were experiencing, a zero increase was considered appropriate. After much discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council a zero increase in the monetary amount of the precept requested from TWBC, with the £5K shortfall from the draft projected budget being met by a reduction in the budget for the Contingency account from £25k to £20k. The levels in the Contingency Account are currently very healthy and it was anticipated that a substantial sum would be carried forward from this year to increase the budgeted amount in next year's accounts. It was recognised that the zero increase in the precept would however appear as a 2.3% increase on the notification residents received from TWBC, due to a reduction of eligible properties that make up the tax base in the Speldhurst parish. The Clerk would liaise with the Admin Assistant to write an article clarifying the figures to residents for the village magazines and social media which this would be publicised in the new year.

17. Items for Information

There were no items for information

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 8.55pm.

Chairman