

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of an online meeting of the **Policy & Resources Committee**, held on **Tuesday 15th December 2020** at 6.00pm.

Present: Councillors: A Watkin (Chair), Miss S Roberts (Vice-Chair), ARH England, Mrs J Loveridge (ex-officio), J G Loveridge, S Parr, G Sinclair, C Turley and Miss S Vaughan-Hodkinson.

Also Present: Mr Michael Turner - Parish Clerk, Mrs S Middleton – Deputy Parish Clerk, Mrs C Higgins – Responsible Finance Officer, and Mr C Corbett - Committee & Finance Secretary (taking the Minutes)

Public Open Session

There were no members of the general public present.

PR/20/40 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs A Corcoran (family commitment)

Cllr Mrs S Vaughan-Hodkinson declared an interest in the Staff Appraisal Scheme and Staff Contracts.

PR/20/41 MINUTES

It was proposed by Cllr Mrs J Loveridge and seconded by Cllr J G Loveridge and **RESOLVED – that the minutes of the previous meetings held on 27th October 2020 and on 1st December 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

PR/20/42 MATTERS ARISING

None.

PR/20/43 CLERK'S REPORT

The Parish Clerk presented a report that outlined a number of matters including :-

- CiLCA – The Deputy Clerk would need to re-register to undertake her CiLCA training (£410.00) as she has not had the opportunity to undertake the work required to complete the course thus far. Also the Clerk would be looking to start his CiLCA qualification.

RESOLVED – that approval be given for the CiLCA re-registration of the Deputy Clerk and the commencement of the CiLCA qualification of the Parish Clerk.

- Service Level Agreements - Having managed personnel issues impacting on both Brookside Big Local and Brookside Central the Clerk intended to review and clarify the Parish Council's contractual and day-to-day practical relationship with both organisations to ensure much more clarity to avoid any of the party's involved being exposed to any undue risk. A further report would be presented to a future meeting.

- Office space

The Clerk reported some apparent issues with the open-plan nature of the office layout at the Sambrook Centre that created challenges for staff to be able to work in a concentrated way.

The situation would not be aided when the general public returned into the Centre. Also if staff need to concentrate on a task, they either retreat to their homes (if it was appropriate to do so) or they have to seek out space in another room in the Centre. Similarly, if the Clerk wished a private conversation with a staff member or a telephone conversation.

The Clerk explained that he would like to seek prices to create a small, private office space within the Parish Council office. This would become the Parish Clerk's Office but would also be available for anyone to use should it be required. Members supported the principles outlined and endorsed the proposal

RESOLVED – that approval be given to the Clerk to make further enquires of the potential cost of the proposal of an office within the Parish Office area.

PR/20/44 FINANCIAL REPORTS

The Receipts and Payments report and the Monthly Cash Control reports, together with the Monthly Payroll reports were presented to the Committee for approval.

It was proposed by Cllr J G Loveridge and seconded by Cllr G Sinclair and subsequently unanimously **RESOLVED that the Monthly Receipts and Payments reports for October 2020, as presented to the Committee, be approved.**

It was proposed by Cllr G Sinclair and seconded by Cllr J G Loveridge and subsequently unanimously **RESOLVED that the Monthly Cash Control reports for September and October 2020, as presented to the Committee, be approved.**

With regard to the Payroll reports the Clerk was experiencing some technical difficulties in presenting the reports on screen to the Committee and consequently it was proposed by Cllr S Parr and seconded by Cllr S Vaughan-Hodkinson and subsequently unanimously **RESOLVED that the Monthly Payroll reports be deferred for consideration at the next Full Council meeting in January 2021.**

PR/20/45 BUDGET 2021/22

Consideration was given to the report on the 2021/2022 Budget for the Committee. The Parish Clerk and the Responsible Finance Officer presented the suggested budget for the Committee and recommended its approval.

During its consideration Members suggested budgetary consideration needed to be given to the potential income/expenditure regarding the Council Tax Support Grant and the costs of the suggested office improvements and certain costs relating to the forthcoming Parish Bi-Elections in May 2021.

Cllr ARH England stated that he understood that the Telford & Wrekin Council would be maintaining the Council Tax Support Grant for a further year.

It was proposed by Cllr Mrs J Loveridge and seconded by Cllr G Sinclair and **RESOLVED – that, subject to additional budget entries relating to Council Tax**

Support Grant, office improvements and Bi-Election costs, the budget as presented, for the Policy & Resources Committee for 2021/2022, be approved.

Cllr Mrs S Vaughan-Hodkinson had previously declared an interest in the next item, as a wife of a Parish Council employee.

PR/20/46 APPRAISAL SCHEME

Consideration was given to a report from the Parish Clerk regarding a Staff Appraisal Scheme for implementation.

The report outlined the general need for the scheme and the suggested methodology. It was suggested that an appraisal system for Stirchley and Brookside be run on an annual basis, with appraisals taking place in February each year. At that point, the strategic expectations and budgeting would have been set for the next financial year. As an added benefit, as many of the Council's "on-the-ground" operations will not be at their seasonal peak, the process need not be hurried.

The Clerk had previously reviewed several options and felt that the format set out set out in the report would work well for Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council.

Essentially, an appraisal meeting date would be agreed with at least 2 weeks' notice. Each party should have an appraisal form to be completed with their thoughts in advance of the meeting. At the meeting itself, which should probably last no more than an hour, there should be discussion around each subject area within the appraisal paperwork. Once each area has been discussed, and the appraisal completed, the appraiser should copy up the record of the appraisal as soon as possible thereafter. The appraiser and appraisee should sign the paperwork and each keep a copy. A copy of the appraisal will also be held on the appraisee's personnel file and should/can be referred to during the appraisal-year to, help to ensure that the next annual appraisal meeting forms part of an ongoing process.

Members supported the proposed Appraisal Scheme.

It was proposed by Cllr J G Loveridge and seconded by Cllr G Sinclair and **RESOLVED – that he proposed Appraisal System be adopted and reviewed after 12 months to assess its suitability.**

Cllr Mrs S Vaughan-Hodkinson abstained from the voting process.

PR/20/47 INTERNAL AUDITOR

The Parish Clerk to report upon the current position of the Internal Auditor. She had been unwell for some time and had announced that she was unable to continue as Internal Auditor for the Parish Council.

The Responsible Finance Officer for the Parish had made resultant enquiries for a replacement Auditor.

It was proposed by Cllr S Parr and seconded by Cllr Mrs S Vaughan- Hodkinson and **RESOLVED – that the RFO invite the potential Auditor to the next Audit Sub-Committee.**

PR/20/48 SPECIALIST SUPPORT/ADVISORS

The Parish Clerk presented a report regarding the potential the use of Specialist Contractors. The report outlined the current use of contractual services for Payroll and for Web-Site provision.

There are two further areas where the Clerk would recommend that specialist advisors be appointed - Human Resources and Health and Safety. The report outlined the merits of employing specialist contractor services in the two areas and the associated potential costs.

Seeking quotes for services from organisations, so that the Parish Council could undertake a like-with-like comparison, was notoriously difficult. However, based on the information provided in the report it was

It was proposed by Cllr J G Loveridge and seconded by Cllr Miss S Roberts and **RESOLVED – that :-**

1) For Human Resources, the Clerk ask the providers of Quote No.1 and Quote No.2 identified in the report (assuming that their quote is less than £500.00) to undertake an initial review of our contracts and make recommendations for change. (This will give an idea of the quality of the service and enable us to consider which provider to go with, if we wish to widen the use of their services);
2) For Health and Safety, to use the providers of Quote No.2 (who are happy to provide their services on a monthly basis) to test the suitability of their services up to a value of £90.00.

PR/20/49 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

The meeting received, for information, the minutes of the Community & Environment Committee held on 1st December 2020.

PR/20/50 CORRESPONDENCE – To receive any correspondence requiring action – none

PR/20/51 COUNCILLORS REPORTS - To receive reports on matters relating to the Committee – Cllr ARH England commented upon the ongoing “Safer Streets” initiative in Brookside.

PR/20/52 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS & PUBLIC

RESOLVED – that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information in relation to any individual, as defined in paragraph 1, and/or information relating to financial or business affairs, as defined in paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act ‘72.

Cllr Mrs S Vaughan-Hodkinson had previously declared an interest in the next item, as a wife of a Parish Council employee.

PR/20/53 STAFF CONTRACTS

The Committee gave consideration to a report from the Parish Clerk that outlined a need to assess the current format of staff contracts in general. There appeared to be some improvements that could be made in the layout and content of the Contracts.

Using pay as a good example, I am not aware if the Council has, or has had, a policy of awarding incremental rises. This needs to be clarified (and I would suggest that a discussion on this, and the contracts in general, be undertaken at the Personnel Sub-Committee) so that staff feel that they are being treated equally, understand how pay rises are awarded and so on.

While I'm not aware that contractual issues have led to any disputes or problems in the past, contractual lack of clarity is not conducive to a harmonious employee/employer relationship and I would recommend that the situation be reviewed as soon as possible.

It was proposed by Cllr S Parr and seconded by Cllr C Turley and **RESOLVED – that the Parish Clerk be authorised to seek external advice on the review of contracts, address certain headline policies and report to a future meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee.**

Meeting finished at 7.34 pm

Chair

Date