

## **HAYDON WICK PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Informal Finance & Policy Committee of Haydon Wick Parish Council held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 7.45pm held remotely via Teams.

### **ATTENDANCE**

**MEMBERS:** Councillors L Rhys-Jones (Chair), S Fateru, R Hailstone, V Manro and R Venkatesh

**OFFICERS:** Clerk, Georgina Morgan-Denn  
P&F Committee Officer and Deputy RFO, Sandra Kelly

### **ALSO IN**

**ATTENDANCE:** Councillor B Patrick-Okoh.

### **FP001 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors S Callen (personal commitments), S Heyes (personal commitments) and A Roupelis (work commitments).

### **FP 002 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **FP 003 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was one member of the public present. A query was raised with regards to Agenda 10A, Financial Matters, Council's budget for 2021-22 and why was the Depot project and costings not brought to a public meeting? The response was that the budget had been brought to several meetings during budget setting and was a public document for residents to view and comment. The project discussions contain sensitive information so has been dealt with in the confidential section of meetings. The Clerk agreed to discuss this issue further outside of the meeting, if required.

### **FP 004 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The new Chairman of the committee, Councillor L Rhys-Jones expressed hers and the committees thanks to the outgoing Chairman, Councillor S Callen for the service she provided during her Chairmanship.

### **FP 005 INVESTMENTS**

Following last month's meeting when Members were provided with information regarding the Churches, Charities & Local Authority (CCLA), Property Fund investment opportunity, it was requested that a presentation by the CCLA takes place at this meeting to provide further information on the Fund. Mark Davies, the Council's Relationship Manager attended the meeting to provide the information and to answer questions. The Council currently invests in the Deposit Fund offered by the CCLA but the Property Fund offers a higher yield. However, it requires a longer-term commitment to benefit from the investment. The presentation covered the risks and costs associated with this type of investment, as well as the higher returns that can be expected in comparison to the Deposit Fund. Following the presentation, there was an opportunity for Councillors to ask questions. A question raised was to ask what the Investment

**Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

Company's exposure to office leases is. The response was that it was in the region of 36%. Although many people are now working from home, which could potentially have had an impact on the fund, in actual fact, all office rent has been received and some vacant properties have been re-let at a higher rent. The Investment Company always has an eye to the future and how to maximise the opportunities as they arise, including the consideration of converting office space into residential or hotel accommodation.

A further discussion on this investment opportunity will take place at June's Finance & Policy meeting, with the aim of putting a recommendation forward under the Scheme of Delegation (see Agenda item, Roadmap to returning to physical meetings below).

**FP 006 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Members received and reviewed the minutes of the Policy & Finance Meeting held on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2021 and recommended to approve them when physical meetings recommence.

**Proposed: Councillor S Fateru                      Seconded: Councillor V Manro**

**Vote: Agreed unanimously.**

**RESOLVED: To recommend approving the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2021 when physical meetings recommence.**

**FP 007 COUNCILLORS REPORTS**

There were no Councillor Reports.

**FP 008 CLERK'S REPORT**

**End of financial year closedown** – this took place with the Council's Finance Support company (Rialtas) on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021. It was completed without any issues and Rialtas were satisfied that the accounts are being processed on the system correctly. The new year's budgets have now been input onto the system so 2020-21 year end and 2021-22 financial reports shall be available for next month's F&P meeting. This prepares us well for the next stage in the financial year - the internal audit and the submission of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). A report regarding this is further along in the Agenda.

**Internal Audit Working Party** - the working party, consisting of Councillors Manro, Rodgers, Rhys-Jones and Callen met with the Clerk and Deputy RFO on 29<sup>th</sup> April. The Terms of Reference were discussed and will be brought to the June F&P meeting for consideration. Following the discussion, the working party carried out some audit checks, taking sample payments as approved at the Finance & Policy meeting, against bank statement transactions. All payments were found to match the approved list.

**Initials: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Request from the Public Health Department at Swindon Borough Council (SBC).** The Parish received a request from the SBC Covid Response Team who have been offering home collection test kits to residents, to be picked up at symptom free test sites, following the Prime Minister's announcement that all people in England would now be able to access twice-weekly rapid tests for coronavirus. SBC have asked if this is something the Parish Council can assist with. After discussion with staff, it was felt that we could potentially offer a limited service of a collection once per week, with strict social distancing measures in place. An offer was made to the Public Health Department to this effect but no further communication has been received to date.

**FP 009 ROADMAP TO RETURNING TO PHYSICAL MEETINGS**

The Clerk reminded members that this Council implemented a Scheme of Delegation in preparation for an unsuccessful High Court ruling. The recent ruling resulted in the ability to meet and make decisions using virtual meeting arrangements as unlawful. This Council has implemented an Emergency Scheme of Delegation to take us through the next few months until the vaccination scheme is fully rolled out and it is safe to return to a meeting room for Council meetings. Following advice received on 14th May from the collective seven County Associations of Local Councils (CALCs), members noted the key messages from the report which recommended a revision to the Scheme of Delegation resolution wording and that the Annual Return/AGAR requires a physical formal meeting of Full Council.

Councillors asked if any alternatives venues had been investigated to enable physical meetings from July 2021, whether it is mandatory that all attendees take rapid flow tests prior to attending physical meetings and whether the length of meetings will be reduced. The Clerk assured members that all of their concerns have been considered, and in consultation with the Health & Safety Advisor, will be address in a revised risk assessment prior to the return of any physical meetings.

**Proposed: Councillor D Rodgers      Seconded: Councillor V Manro**  
**Vote: Agreed Unanimously.**

**RESOLVED:**

**1. Based on recent CALC advice to reconfirm the Scheme of Delegation resolution wording as: "That the Council delegates authority to the Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman to take any actions necessary with associated expenditure to protect the interests of the community and ensure council business continuity, informed by consultation with the members of the council. The scheme of delegation will be reviewed in July 2021."**

**2. To hold a physical Full Council meeting on 22nd June 2021 to sign the AGAR and Annual Return. This meeting will be limited to the minimum number of Councillors (Quorum is 6) and 1 Clerk.**

**3. To review the Scheme of Delegation at the beginning of July following the most recent government guidance and advice from our Health & Safety consultant.**

**Initials: \_\_\_\_\_**

**FP 010 FINANCIAL MATTERS**

Members were advised that the 2020-2021 financial end of year closedown took place on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021. Therefore, some of the reports usually presented will not be available for this meeting and will be brought to the June meeting of the Finance & Policy Committee.

**FP 010A** Members reviewed the Council's budget for 2021-2022 which had been approved when setting the Precept at Full Council on 26 January 2021.

**FP 010B** Members received and noted the bank balances and statements as at 30th April 2021.

**FP 010C** Committee received the payment schedules for April/May 2021 under purchase daybook references 1477-1522. The schedules also included payments that had already been approved at April's meeting that have just been input onto the finance system now that the financial year has been closed down. After amendments being notified to members, the page total of £115,551.68 was recommended for consideration under the Scheme of Delegation, bearing in mind some transactions had already been approved at the last meeting and paid.

**Proposed: Councillor R Hailstone      Seconded: Councillor D Rodgers**  
**Vote: Agreed unanimously**

**RESOLVED: For the payment schedule under daybook references 1477-1522 for the sum of £115,551.68 be recommended for approval to the Clerk, the Chairman and Vice Chairman, under the Scheme of Delegation.**

**FP 011 ANNUAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

**FP 011A Bank signatories:** The Chair advised that Agenda item 11A recommending the signatory list to Full Council is incorrect due to the Council adopting the Emergency 2021 Scheme of Delegation so the recommendation contained in the Officer's report, will be taken to the Clerk, Chairman and Vice Chairman to adopt.:

- 1) the removal of Councillors L Brown, J Fuller and S McDermott from the signatory list;
- 2) To set up Councillors L Rhys-Jones and D Rodgers as new signatories;
- 3) In accordance with the Finance & Policy Committee membership and roles in the Council for the six (6) signatories for 2021-22 to be: Councillors L Rhys-Jones (Chair of F&P), Councillor V Manro (Chairman), Councillor D Rodgers (Vice Chairman), Councillor R Hailstone (F&P Committee Member), Councillor S Callen (F&P Committee Member) and Georgina Morgan-Denn (Clerk).
- 4) For the Emergency approver to be: Councillor L Rhys-Jones (Chair of F&P)

As Councillor Callen is absent from this meeting, the Deputy Responsible Finance Officer will ask Councillor Callen for confirmation that she is prepared to take on this responsibility.

**Proposed: Councillor R Hailstone      Seconded: Councillor V Manro**  
**Vote: Agreed unanimously.**

**RESOLVED: To recommend that the Clerk, Chairman and Vice Chairman, under the Council's adopted Emergency 2021 Scheme of Delegation:**

**Initials: \_\_\_\_\_**

1. **Remove Councillors L Brown, J Fuller and S McDermott as signatories**
2. **To set up Councillors L Rhys-Jones as new signatories**
3. **For the new signatories for 21-22 to be:**
  - Councillor L Rhys-Jones**
  - Councillor V Manro**
  - Councillor D Rodgers**
  - Councillor R Hailstone**
  - Councillor S Callen**
  - Georgina Morgan-Denn (Clerk)****and for the Deputy RFO to confirm that Councillor S Callen is prepared to be added to the list of signatories and to be set up as a new signatory.**
4. **For the emergency approver to be Councillor L Rhys-Jones.**

**FP 011B** Members noted that the Pension Annual Return has been submitted to Wiltshire Pension Fund.

**FP 012 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR)**  
Members received a verbal update on the AGAR timetable to note that the annual close down of the accounts took place with Rialtas (who provide support for the finance system) on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021 which prepares us for the next stage on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2021 when the internal audit takes place.

**FP 013 COVID-19 DISCRETIONARY GRANT OVERPAYMENT**  
Committee received a report stating that at the Annual Council meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021, it was agreed that the Parish Council would repay Swindon Borough Council the overpayment of £20,000 made to us. As reported at the Finance & Policy Committee meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2021, returning the £20,000 would result in a projected overspend of this budget of £2,926. However, after year end closedown this sum will be met by underspends in other areas of the budget.

**FP 014 IT OUTAGE**  
Members received a verbal update that, last month, it was reported that we had an internet failure (on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021) on both of our lines. A temporary fix was eventually put in place by Councillor Manro. Our service provider arranged for BT Openreach to attend the Offices on the 28<sup>th</sup> April to reinstall the line but they were given the incorrect information so another temporary fix had to be made. This meant that we have not had full capacity for our broadband but it enabled us to continue to work until a permanent fix could be put in place. The request for this fix was marked as urgent by our service provider on 29<sup>th</sup> April. However, the date given to attend was not until Friday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2021 when the re-connection did take place. We have been in negotiation with our service provider regarding compensation for the loss of service and now the fix has been made, a few more checks are required and then a credit will be applied to our account.

**FP 015 COMMUNITY BUS AND ROOM HIRE**  
A verbal update was given to Members to inform them that a few enquiries have been received from our regular bookers and users of our facilities and with the anticipated easing of lockdown restrictions from 21st June, we are considering

**Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

opening up these services as of July. We have consulted our H&S Advisor regarding the risk assessments we have in place and have been advised to review them further, nearer the time we anticipate recommencing these services, in order to encompass the current guidelines. In the meanwhile, we are arranging for a meeting with our volunteer bus drivers to familiarise them with the process for recommencing the service. A further update shall be provided at the 15<sup>th</sup> June Finance & Policy meeting.

**FP 016 ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**

To include:

- Discussion and decision on investing in the Property Bond with the CCLA
- Terms of Reference for the Internal Audit Working Party
- Ear Marked Reserves

Any other items to be sent to the Clerk in advance of the next meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

**FP 017 EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:** In accordance with Standing Order 3 (d) that 'in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted and in the public interest, that the press and public be temporarily excluded, and they be instructed to withdraw'. Reason: Commercially Sensitive.

**FP 018 INSURANCE MATTERS**

Members were given a verbal update with regard to current insurance matters. Cases outstanding are:

- 1. Damage to hire vehicle** – on 26<sup>th</sup> March, the wind caught the door of one of our hire vehicles (DU17 JRZ), causing damage to the door. At last month's meeting, it was reported that "It is our responsibility to arrange for the repair but as it will cost less than the £250 excess on our insurance. This repair is being carried out independently of our insurance Company and the Council will need to foot the bill". Since this reporting this, there has been a further update in that the work on the vehicle to straighten the door has taken place and there was no charge. The hinges that were damaged have not been replaced but will require replacement at some stage. The vehicle is roadworthy. Swindon Car & Van Hire's suggestion is that this work is carried out when the vehicle is off-hired by us. This cost will be below £200 so as stated previously, under our insurance policy excess. We may have the vehicle another year or 2, so it seems appropriate to go with that option for the cost of the door hinge replacement to be added to any other costs at the end of the hire period for that vehicle.
- 2. Subsidence claim.** No further communication has been received. We have put our insurers in touch with Swindon Borough Council as the resident is claiming against both the Parish Council and the Borough Council.
- 3. Damaged wall (1).** The insurance company requested that the vegetation is removed whilst considering the claim further. Our Parks & Open Spaces Manager visited the property and confirmed that the vegetation has been removed but it is not known who removed the vegetation.

**Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Damage to wall (2).** A letter from solicitors Bower & Bailey was received as reported at last month's F&P meeting. It is believed that we have been copied into the case for information only but we have notified our insurance company nevertheless. We have received no further communication.

The meeting closed at 21:23

**Chairman:**

**Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_