

THE IVERS PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE POLICY, FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 25TH NOVEMBER 2019 at 7.30 PM IN THE MEETING ROOM, COUNCIL OFFICES, THE IVERS PARISH COUNCIL

Present: Councillors Wendy Matthews (Chairman), Ann Mayling, Carol Gibson, Chris Jordan and Chris Woolley

In Attendance: Mike Kennedy, Interim Clerk

Absent: Cllrs: Jyoti Kaushal; Karanveer Bembey and Bill Lidgate

59. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Cllr. Jacquie Bryson.

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

61. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

No questions were put.

62. THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy, Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 25 September 2019, be received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

63. PROGRESS REPORT

Members had before them the progress report dated 21 November 2019. The following additional points were made:

63 Chequers Orchard – The Clerk confirmed that the comparative floor areas for the former Police Station and 63 Chequers Orchard had been established. The full year insurance rent payable by Templewood Clinic is therefore £478.38. The Council's property surveyor, PJSA, will invoice Templewood Clinic for this year from date of occupation. It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

LAF Projects – Photographs had been taken following completion of the Iver Heath Recreation Ground lighting scheme. These would be submitted to the LAF along with a project revaluation report for the release of LAF funding earmarked for this scheme. It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

It was **RESOLVED** that the progress report be received and noted.

64. CLERK'S REPORT

Members had before them the report of the Clerk dated 21 November 2019. Arising from the report:

- (a) Christmas Lights** – The Committee was asked to retrospectively approve expenditure incurred, on grounds of urgency, relating to the purchase of additional illuminations for the large fir tree in Iver Heath ahead of the switch on due to take place on 30 November.

Arising from the foregoing it was also reported that TfB had agreed to waive the charges for obtaining permits allowing vehicles to work on the highway for installation and removal of the festive decorations. It was **RESOLVED** that the payment of £815 to Lamps and Tubes for additional illuminations to the fir tree in Iver Heath be retrospectively approved on grounds of urgency as a charge to the Christmas Street Lighting budget; and that TfB decision to waive the charge for permits be noted with satisfaction.

- (b) **Internal Audit Report** – Members had before them a copy of the report of the Council's appointed Internal Auditor following his visit on 21 October together with the Clerk's suggested responses to the issues raised. As regards item no.6 a member corrected the auditor's conclusion that "invoices have not been approved in accordance with the Council's financial regulations" as being factually inaccurate. It had been a single invoice which the auditor could not find on the day. However, all invoices are scanned to the payments system and a replacement copy was inserted. It was **RESOLVED** that the auditor be asked to correct this inaccuracy and that the Clerk's suggested replies to the recommendations be approved and adopted as the Council's formal response.
- (c) **Standing Orders** – The Committee considered the Council's previously adopted Standing Orders in September 2018. In noting the Internal Auditor's recommendation that these should be reviewed annually, it was **RESOLVED** that the Committee re-adopts the Council's Standing Orders and undertakes a further review in November 2020.
- (d) **Financial Regulations** – The Committee re-considered the Council's previously adopted Financial Regulations in September 2019, in line with the Model Financial Regulations issued by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) in July 2019, having regard to the Council's actual position against the model regulations previously adopted. It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee adopts the revised Financial Regulations as set out in Appendix 3 and the further comments made at the meeting.
- (e) **Permitted use of Council's Debit Card** - The Committee had before them, copy having been issued, new arrangements for the use of the Council's debit card. It was **RESOLVED** that the new arrangements for the use of the Council's debit card be received, approved and adopted.
- (f) **Open Spaces Society** - The annual subscription to the Open Space Society was due on 1 July 2019. Retrospective approval of the membership fee of £45 was considered given the Council had been a member of the society for many years. It was **RESOLVED** that this Council renews its membership of the Open Spaces Society for 2019/20 and retrospectively authorises payment of £45.
- (g) **Devices for Councillors** – Members considered the funding of tablets/iPads for councillors to inter alia better access the Council's SharePoint, and whether provision for these should be made in the budget for 2020/21. In noting the strong support shown by those Councillors who had replied to the Clerk's survey, it was **RESOLVED** that a budgetary provision of £4,000 be earmarked in the 2020/21 estimates towards the purchase of tablets/iPads for Councillors after the local elections next year. Arising from the foregoing, a Member reported that switching to classic view in SharePoint enabled documents to be more easily downloadable and printable.
- (h) **GDPR and Data Sharing** – The report outlined opportunities for the Council to

strengthen its compliance and understanding of the General Data Protection Regulations including: a compliance review to help gain a good understanding of the scope of our data; our data transfers; third party involvement; and a review of our policy documentation, processes and compliance requirements.

It was agreed that the Council would benefit from a comprehensive review of the council's approach to data protection, data security measures and the data we process (i.e. parish records, HR, Finance, website etc) and the third party Data Processors (accountants, contractors, solicitors, cloud / IT providers, HR or payroll agency, CCTV monitoring / site security etc) they involve.

A gap analysis report would highlight the various issues raised along with the mitigation steps required, including staff and councillor awareness, training, policy and documentation requirements, process and procedure changes, additional security measures and IT solutions. A full report would be presented to Committee such that all the recommendations are understood, and any further questions can be answered. It is noted that the DPO Centre was acknowledged as a good provider of these services. It was **RESOLVED** that provision be made in the 2020/21 estimates to undertake a comprehensive review as outlined in the Clerk's report and that £3,500 be included in the budget for this purpose.

- (i) **New Banking Arrangements** – Members examined alternative bankers to the Council's current provider. Although Metro Bank offers free banking and a debit card, they do not enable on-line payments to be made by dual authority and a short-term savings account is not available. The committee rejected Barclays because there were compatibility issues with the Council's accounting software, Xero. The internal auditor had suggested Unity Bank because they offer both dual payment authorisation and a savings account. However, they do not offer a debit card and their fees were considered prohibitive. Lloyds Bank were also recommended by the internal auditor. They offer a two-step authorisation, instant access, 32-day deposits and short and fixed term deposits.

The Committee considered but rejected opportunities offered by Churches, Charities and Local Authorities, (CCLA) for investing in their Public Sector Deposit Fund, on grounds of undue risk in the money markets. It was **RESOLVED** that the officers continue to explore alternative providers who can offer on-line banking; dual authorisation of payments; short term savings accounts; a debit card; and competitive fees, the options to including Lloyds Bank, (nearest local branch is in Uxbridge); but that the Council does not apply to CCLA for investment in the Public Sector Deposit Fund.

- (j) **Grant to Richings Park Residents Association** - The Council had awarded a grant of £200 to the Richings Park Village Action Group towards a Christmas Family Fun Event for the residents of Richings Park, Full Council, 4 November 2019 Minute No. 78(e) refers. Although the application was in the name of the Richings Park Village Action Group, the applicant had requested that payment be made to himself and when this was denied to the Richings Park Residents Association (RPRA).

In the interests of transparency, a new application form had been submitted in the name of the Richings Park Residents Association and Members were invited to approval the award of a grant to RPRA. It was **RESOLVED** that the application from Richings Park Residents Association for a grant of £200 towards their Christmas Family Fun Day be approved.

- (k) **Council Access Point** – The report gave details of the proposed partnership agreement between the incoming Buckinghamshire Council for the operation of a Council Access Point (CAP) at the Community Library within the Council offices in Iver.

The CAP, is one of 18 across the county, will serve the residents of Iver, Iver Heath and Richings Park and surrounding villages. Staff support residents to access Council services on -line through an iPad provided by the Buckinghamshire Council.

Full training will be provided in the use of the iPad; a direct telephone number will also be given allowing staff and the public prioritised access within the customer services queueing system. Although there will be no dramatic change in the service currently provided by this Council, each CAP will better advertise and promote the service available within Iver and the wider community. Signage promoting the CAP will also be provided. The iPad is portable and could be used once a month at the Senior Citizens Coffee Morning. Buckinghamshire Council will also make a one-off payment of £500 to cover all consumable, take responsibility for the maintenance of the iPad and its insurance. It was **RESOLVED** that the proposed partnership agreement between the incoming Buckinghamshire Council for the operation of a Council Access Point (CAP) at the Community Library within the Council offices in Iver be supported Monday – Friday 9am-2pm and signed by the Chairman.

- (l) **Christmas Holiday Arrangements** – The Committee reviewed its previous decision made on 15 May 2019, min.no. 18e, to close the office to public but that staff take 3 days from their annual leave entitlement. Since this obliges staff to take annual leave when the office is closed, it was **RESOLVED** that the offices remain closed to the public for the 3 working days between Christmas and New Year but that staff be allowed to work from the office subject to safeguards of lone working or take leave and/or time off in lieu for those days they are not at work during this period.

65. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

- (a) **Devolution Offer.** The Chairman reported details of the Buckinghamshire Shadow Executive's Devolution Offer. This presents the parish council with an opportunity not only to make bids for the transfer of assets but also the devolution of services. This would have an impact on next year's budget including a possible requirement for funding for an additional groundsman. It was **RESOLVED** that the matter be referred to Full Council on 6 January 2020 for further consideration.
- (b) **Community Boards.** The Chairman informed the Committee of the proposal to set up 16 new community boards replacing the Local Area Forums from April 2020. A new Wexham and Ivers Community Board will be established replicating the LAF with the following funding: Community Area Priorities Fund £75,902; Health and Wellbeing Fund £29,363; and Local Infrastructure Fund £70,686 (based on the number of houses, 1450, in the emerging local plan.

Arising from the foregoing, it was further reported that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Planning Hearing had taken place and the levy should be in place by February 2020. The Council will need to consider projects for appropriating CIL receipts. It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

66. **LAF PROJECTS**

The Committee considered two schemes for possible LAF funding:

- (a) **Iver Recreation Ground Lighting** – The Chairman of the Highways and Infrastructure Committee reported that this project had been discussed with SSE and that a quotation requested. The scheme involves footpath lighting along the left-hand side of the field and in Saxon Court Car Park. Currently, the area is uninviting for dog walkers and was recommended in the Youth Report for improvement. A similar project at Iver Heath had resulted in improved security, and a reduction in the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. It was estimated that 9 new lights would cost c£3,500.
- (b) **Iver Heath Recreation Ground Playthings** – Following the failure to secure funding from South Bucks DC for the improvements and renovations to the children's' playthings and safety surface, the Amenities Committee had suggested an application to the LAF for an inclusive roundabout suitable for wheelchair users. It was **RESOLVED** that applications be submitted to the LAF for these two projects.

67. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN / LOCAL PLAN

The Chairman of the Planning Committee indicated her commitment to kick-start the Neighbourhood Plan in the New Year. It was understood that the previous emphasis towards community lead Neighbourhood Plans has now changed. The focus is now on parish councils taking the lead and encouraging their communities so far as possible and setting out the issues that need to be addressed within the NP concept. There followed a discussion on the role of the Council's existing consultant and his work to date. It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk conducts a critical appraisal of the current situation and presents a report with options to a meeting of the NP Working Group in the New Year.

68. JOINT CONNECTIVITY STATEMENT

The Chairman referred to the joint statement published by Slough; Windsor and Maidenhead, Chiltern and South Bucks and Bucks Council and Colne Valley Regional Park concerning the quality of connectivity for active travel with links to green infrastructure required as part of Heathrow expansion, copy having been issued. Members expressed their disappointment that The Ivers Parish Council had not been consulted. The proposals do not show existing connections only new routes. The connection between North Park and the Motorway goes through a heritage landscape site. This will have a deleterious effect on the landscape. Members expressed their discontent on the proposed route through Thorney Park. There appeared to be no evidence for these proposed additional routes or whether they were replacing existing routes. It was **RESOLVED** that the Council's dissatisfaction be conveyed to the Colne Valley Regional Park in the terms expressed at the meeting.

69. FINANCE

- a) The Committee received and considered the budget analysis papers for all council committees, copies having been issued, and previously adopted by spending committees. It was **RESOLVED** that the reports be received and noted.
- b) Members considered the draft budget setting report for the Policy, Finance and General Purposes Committee, copy having been issued. The Chairman outlined several significant matters including the uplift in employers National Insurance contributions by 13.8%; a 2% increase in pay; the 25.9% employers pension contribution as well as new budget provision for GDPR, £3,500; iPads for Councillors, £4,000 and £6,000 for buildings surveys. It was **RESOLVED** that the draft budget setting report for the Policy, Finance and General Purposes Committee be received, approved and adopted.
- c) The Committee continued its deliberations on the level of precept increase to be recommended to Council for 2020/21. The Chairman reported that the Tax Base has gone up by an insignificant sum which appears not to take into consideration the extra

housing development that will come through the system. Therefore, any increase in Council tax will have to come from precept. It was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** that Council limits any increase in the Council tax for 2020/21 to 2.9%.

d) Consideration of outstanding debts – No report.

70. RECRUITMENT FOR THE POST OF CLERK TO THE COUNCIL

Members had before then the Job Description for the post of Clerk following the appointment made earlier in the year and agreed not to make changes. It was confirmed that the post would be advertised on a spot salary within the range £38-£42k, that the person specification be refreshed and that a draft advert be prepared for presentation to the HR committee for further consideration including arrangements for short listing and interview over a 2-stage process. It was **RESOLVED** that the recruitment for the post of Clerk to the Council be progressed in the New Year as discussed at the meeting.

71. PRESS RELEASE/WEBSITE

Christmas Office closures and Information on the new Buckinghamshire Authority

72. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was **RESOLVED** that the Public and Press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as matters about to be discussed are considered to be confidential and may involve disclosure of information about members of staff.

73. STAFFING MATTERS

- (a) **Interim Clerk arrangements** – The report outlined the comparison between the fee paid to the consultant compared to the salary, employer’s national insurance and pension contributions paid to the previous clerk, an increase of just 0.71p per hour. The consultant is currently working 3 days a week and members were invited to consider increasing the number of hours to that of a full-time post. It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee approves the revised hours of work for the Interim Clerk subject to personal commitments and re-affirms Mr. Kennedy’s appointment as the Council’s professional consultant on the same hourly rate but for 5 days, 37 hours per week
- (b) **Temporary Administrative Assistant** – The Committee considered extending the temporary administrative assistant’s contract for a further 3 weeks to provide cover for the Assistant Clerk who is on annual leave for one week in December and to support the Interim Clerk in his increased role. It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee extends the contract for the temporary administrative assistant by a further 3 weeks and meets the additional cost of £1,416.60 from the staffing budget.
- (c) **Handy Man** – The Committee reviewed the post of handy man, a post established by the previous clerk to support the Parks Service in their work for 8 hours per week including water testing for Legionella and other checks as required, e.g. fridge/freezer temperatures. It was **RESOLVED** that subject to confirmation from the head groundsman that staff can undertake these checks themselves, given there is a disproportionate amount of time retaining his services, the appointed be ended but that he be engaged on an as needed basis.

Meeting finished at 10:15pm.

Date of Next Meeting Wednesday 5TH February 2020, 7.30 pm, The Ivers Parish Council Offices.

Signed.....Chairman

Date.....