

## HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes: **Policy and Finance Committee** held on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2011

### Present Cllrs:

**J Ash-Edwards (Chairman)**  
**T Farmer (Vice Chairman)**  
**C Ash-Edwards**  
**R Bates**  
**D Dorking**  
**M Davies**  
**S Hillier**

Apologies \*\* Absent \*

### Also present:

**Cllrs Sabin and Pulfer**

### 13. Apologies

None

### 14. Minutes

The minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee held on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2011 were taken as read, confirmed as a true record and duly signed.

### 15. Substitutes

None

### 16. Declarations of Interest

Cllr J Ash-Edwards declared a personal interest in item 7 as the Polling Places Review came under his portfolio as a Cabinet Member for Mid Sussex District Council.

Cllr Bates declared a personal interest in item 9 as he benefited from the scheme being considered.

Cllr Farmer declared a personal interest in item 8 as he was a member of Mid Sussex District Council's working group who was developing the Community Infrastructure Charging Schedule.

### 17. **Payments and receipts, and income and expenditure reports for the period April 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 – July 31<sup>st</sup> 2011.**

Members had before them the list of Payments and Financial Income and Expenditure Statements for the period **April 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 – July 31<sup>st</sup> 2011**. With two matters arising;

- It was asked why a budget was 170% over spent and to support this how do Councillor's, who are cheque signatories, check if they signing cheques that result in an over spend of a budget heading. There is not a process to check budgets against at the present time as the budgets are continuously updated. It was noted that the overspend was unavoidable due to an advert having to be placed for the position of Community Liaison Officer, which was not budgeted for.
- It was questioned why costs were being expended on the Spring Festival individually and why there was not a budget heading for the event. The RFO explained that all Town Council events are carried under one budget heading, which was broken down in preparation of last year's budget.

Members **RESOLVED** to;

**Recommend the list of payments for income and expenditure for the period April 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 – July 31<sup>st</sup> 2011 to Full Council for approval.**

**18. Presentation by Internal Auditor**

Mr John Roberts the Council's Internal Auditor attended the meeting to introduce himself to the new Council and to outline the role of internal audit and how he sees himself fitting into the Council's audit procedures. Mr Roberts stressed that he was not here to catch the Council out but to ensure that the systems are in place to make sure that financial actions of the Council are undertaken in accordance with legislation. His work tested the systems used to regulate and monitor the financial processes in place and make suggestion to improve them. Members thanked Mr Roberts who was happy to answer questions and to engage in debate on the matter. The main concern of Councillors was the absence of an audit plan and risk management system for audit. It was requested that these documents be drawn up for Members consideration. Mr Roberts confirmed that he would assist the Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) in producing the documents and would provide examples to assist in developing the required documents. Members turned to the papers attached to the covering report, which Mr Roberts had produced for the previous Council and picked up on two points. Firstly Members were concerned that there was no one to cover the (RFO) work if was to be absent for a prolonged period and he was the only officer who could use the Council's financial systems. Secondly, it was questioned why officers, in some instances were reimbursed for large purchases made on behalf of the Council. The Clerk agreed that both issues needed to be addressed and added that through the Council's personal performance plans he was looking at directing the time of front office to staff to assist the (RFO) and that there was a need to look into obtaining a corporate credit card, whilst being mindful of what charges may be associated to the card. The reason for large payments to staff was due to some suppliers requiring immediate payment on purchase rather than invoicing. Members thanked Mr Roberts for his time and looked forward to receiving his midyear report in due course and then,

Members **RESOLVED** to;

- (a) Instruct the Clerk to formulate an Audit Plan with the Town Council's auditor.**
- (b) The Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer to put into place contingency arrangements for the administration of the Council's financial systems.**

**19. Mid Sussex District Council – Polling Places Review**

Members reviewed Haywards Heath's existing Polling Stations and made the following observations.

- There should be an additional polling station in Franklands Ward as there is one location at the present time, which gets very busy.
- ACF Hall Eastern Road is very dated and unwelcoming.
- Church of the Presentation has parking problems due to parking restrictions at the junction with Western Road.

- In Ashenground Ward there is an imbalance of vote numbers between the two Polling Stations located at Ashenground Community Centre.
- Lucastes and Bolnore Wards stations were deemed to be satisfactory.
- Clair Hall, Heath Ward, was agreed to be sufficient, but there were issues about narrow corridors and lighting problems.

Members **RESOLVED** to;

**Instruct the Clerk to make representation to Mid Sussex District Council on its Polling Places review in line with comments of the committee.**

**20. Mid Sussex District Council Draft 'Community Involvement Plan'**

Members welcomed the Community Involvement Plan and didn't have any major concerns with its content. The feeling was that it, if executed appropriately, would achieve its desired outcomes. The main issue raised was about how Haywards Heath Town Council could fit into the process and how the plan could be used to promote the Council's Neighbourhood Planning work. The Clerk informed Members that Mid Sussex District Council had asked if it could use the Council's Newsletter and website to advertise their plan and future consultations mainly for the upcoming District Plan Consultation. The Chairman asked that any further comment be sent directly to the Clerk before the 19<sup>th</sup> October deadline otherwise it will be deemed that Members were happy with the document.

Members **AGREED** to;

**Instruct the Clerk to make a representation to Mid Sussex District Council supporting the draft Community Involvement Plan for its District Plan and Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule.**

**21. Senior Railcard Subsidy**

Members considered the implications to the Council of offering a subsidy on senior railcards. It was noted that the offer was historical and was a second subsidy, on top of that already offered by Mid Sussex District Council. In addition, the subsidy was discretionary and not offered by all Town/Parish Council across Mid Sussex. There was concern that the subsidy was not open to all residents of the Town and that the Council could not control its financial exposure as it had no way of testing who would take up the offer. It was also questioned whether there could be a better use of money within the Council's budgets. Members agreed that the subsidy was welcomed by those eligible and that it gave the Council great kudos amongst residents, but in the current climate every budget heading needed to be challenged. It was agreed that it was not the appropriate time to make a decision on the matter and that retention of the subsidy should be considered as part of the budget setting process that was about to commence, with this,

Members **RESOLVED** to;

**Be mindful to recommend that the Railcard Voucher subsidy be stopped for the 2012-2013 Council year when budget setting is undertaken.**

## **22. Funding Application – Citizens Advice Bureau**

Members considered the grant application, which outlined a programme of financial capability training sessions. It was noted that this was a second application from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) after the original application was deferred at the meeting of the Committee in April 2011. Members welcomed an application that focused on a specific project rather than the un-quantifiable costs the Council had awarded in the past. However, where Members had no major concerns with the project and supported its philosophy, they still had concerns relating to the financial situation of the (CAB), the level of funding being requested and the funding breakdown.

As per Members original comments back in April the applicant still could not provide up to date accounts. Members were disappointed that this information was not available and that the application itself didn't seem to be very well thought through. This was on the grounds that part of the funding was to publicise the training session, which led to Members questioning why the applicant had not ascertained a need for the project and should already know its target audience. It was also felt that £120 for refreshments should be removed from the application and most of the other project costing headings needed to be challenged. Members again asked that the application be deferred and that it be prudent now that the project is broadly supported to delegate the decision and agreement of the potential level of funding to the Chairman and Leader. This was agreed with the caveat that any grant award would be subject to inspection of the audited accounts of the CAB and challenge of the funding breakdown.

Members **RESOLVED**;

**An amended recommendation to not award a grant to the Citizens Advice Bureau at the present time but to delegate the decision to the Leader and the Chairman of the Committee, when further information is available and the recommendation to move the surplus £3000 under the budget heading in to capital reserves.**

## **23. Grant Applications**

Members considered six grant applications. Members considered each grant individually and subsequently,

Members **RESOLVED** to;

- a) **Award a grant of £250 to 4Sight Bradbury Centre to fund the work of the Contact Officer.**
- b) **Not to award a grant to Circles Network.**
- c) **Award a grant of £250 to Furnihelp to assist with the running costs of the projects for the van collection and delivery service.**
- d) **Award a grant of £150 to West Sussex Mediation Service to fund a free mediation service for residents of Haywards Heath.**
- e) **Award a grant of £250 to Mid Sussex Choir for the hire of music, soloists and orchestral players for their concerts.**
- f) **Award a grant of £250 to Mid Sussex Sinfonia for the cost of hiring extra musicians, additional soloists and music hire**

**24. West Sussex County Council Cluster Working Arrangements**

The Clerk informed Members that an exploratory meeting had been held with Lindfield, Linfield Rural and Ardingly Parish Council. The Clerk and the Leader of the Council who was also present at the meeting, felt while the discussions were worthwhile that there didn't, at the present time, seem to be any benefit to Haywards Heath Town Council. West Sussex County Council is asking for projects to be brought forward, but there is no indication that money will follow service. This would put the Town Council in a difficult position because it would mean that groundstaff would have work outside the Town. This would put pressure on the staff and be detrimental to the services they provide the Town. The Town Council could not justifiably raise Council Tax as the tax payer already pays West Sussex County Council to provide the service(s) that could be potentially passed down. The Clerk explained he would continue to keep an eye on the situation and talk to neighbouring parish councils. Members thanked the Clerk and noted that there were other priorities facing the Council and the initiative should be monitored closely for the foreseeable future.

Members **AGREED** to;

**Note the Clerks Update**

**25. Urgent Business**

The Chairman updated the Committee on the latest situation regarding Haywards Heath market and the ongoing issues with the bus companies. It was noted that there had been numerous complaints about the rerouting of bus services around the Town on a Saturday as a result of the closure of The Broadway. It was noted that the bus companies and the organisers of the market were placing blame for the problem on each other for the problems, and that West Sussex County Council (WSSC) as the highway authority would be intervening to help resolve the situation. Members felt that Haywards Heath Town Council as a representative of the community should write to the bus companies to implore them to come to a satisfactory arrangement with WSSC.

Members **RESOLVED** to;

**Contact Countryliner and Metro bus companies in relation to bus service routing in light of The Broadway Market.**

The meeting closed at 9.17pm