

NORTH HORSHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 30TH AUGUST 2018 AT 7.30pm AT ROFFEY MILLENNIUM HALL

Present: Cllr. P. Burgess, Cllr R. Millington, Cllr J. Smithurst (Vice Chairman)*,
Cllr S. Torn (Chairman), Cllr R. Turner and Cllr. Mrs S. Wilton.

* denotes absence

In attendance: Clerk, Pauline Whitehead BA(Hons) FSLCC and Vivien Edwards (Deputy Clerk).

FA/242/18 Public Forum

There were no members of the public in attendance.

FA/243/18 Apologies

The Committee received apologies and reasons for absence from Cllr J Smithurst.

FA/244/18 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28th June 2018 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as being a correct record.

FA/245/18 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

FA/246/18 Chairman's Announcements

An invoice for £150 had been sent to the offender who sprayed graffiti on a bus shelter at Jackdaw Lane and in other areas of North Horsham. Any non-payment will be treated in the usual way.

A letter of appreciation had been received for the grant of £1,000 awarded to Age UK Horsham District on June 2018 in respect of an event to improve health and well-being.

In 2018/19 the Government decided to defer the setting of referendum principles for town and parish councils for three years. However, this was conditional upon the sector taking all available steps to mitigate the need for council tax increases, including the use of reserves where they are not already earmarked for other uses or for "invest to save" projects which will lower ongoing costs and the Government seeing clear evidence of restraint in the increases set by the sector. In 2018/19, the average Band D parish precept increased by 4.9% (£3.02). This compares to a 6.3% increase (£3.63) in 2017/18 and is the lowest year on year increase in parish precept since 2015-16. In view of this, the Government intends

to continue the deferral of setting referendum principles for town and parish councils, but encourages parish councils to continue this downward trend and will keep this area under active review.

FA/247/18 Internal Controls Working Party

The Finance and Administration Committee received the notes from the Internal Controls Working Party held on 13th August 2018. It was noted that there were some minor issues and the Councillors in attendance at the working party signed the control sheets kept with the notes to that effect.

The Finance Committee RESOLVED to invite a member of staff who deals with bookings to attend the next Internal Controls Working Party Meeting where Sales Testing and Procedures are on the agenda.

Two items were not covered by the Working Party, confirming that the bank mandates are up to date and that budget monitoring is done regularly. This will be put onto the agenda for the next Internal Controls Working Party Meeting in October 2018.

FA/248/18 Financial Review to 31st July 2018

The Committee considered the detailed income and expenditure report, the income and expenditure summary and the balance sheet generated from the electronic financial system, along with the Excel reserves sheet to 31st July 2018, all circulated with the agenda.

It was RESOLVED to:-

- 1. Note the attached Financial Report, the reserve balances and balance sheet at 31st July 2018.**
- 2. Confirm that the bank reconciliation at 31st July 2018 agrees to the cashbook and bank statement. The documents were signed by the Committee Chairman.**
- 3. To note that Signatories for the Lloyds Bank Account are:- Cllr A. Britten, Cllr P. Burgess, Cllr R. Knight, Cllr M. Loates, Cllr S. Torn, Cllr R. Turner and Cllr S. Wilton. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk are also signatories for administration purposes. The Administration Clerk can access bank statements as part of his work.
Signatories for the Co-operative Bank and Nationwide Building Society are:- Cllr P. Burgess, Cllr R. Knight, Cllr S. Torn, Cllr R. Turner and Cllr S. Wilton. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk are also signatories for administration purposes.**

FA/24918 North Heath Hall Hire in hot weather

A booking for North Heath Hall on 1st July 2018 for 3.5 hours (invoice 22040 £74.90) was cancelled by the hirer with a request that the charge for the hire be

waived. The reason given was that the predicted temperature for Horsham on 1st July 2018 was 30 degrees Celsius. The hirer considered that North Heath Hall has very little ventilation, as their event involves lots of tables filling the hall and usually lots of people in attendance they felt the air flow would be reduced further. The hirer classed this as a safety risk as their demographic is pregnant ladies and young families. The cancellation was made seven days prior to the event, therefore did not adhere to the terms and conditions for hiring the halls which requires fourteen days written notice prior to cancellation. (The Property Committee has since changed the terms and conditions to read that 'there must be twenty eight days written notice prior to cancellation' at their meeting on 16th August 2018)

The temperature reached 30 degrees Celsius on 1st July 2018 according to the BBC weather website. The Parish Council staff offered a limited number of fans for the event but the offer was declined.

The Finance and Administration Committee RESOLVED to make an exception due to the exceptionally hot weather and as a gesture of goodwill, but without prejudice, waive the charge for the hire, but to levy a £10 administration fee to go towards the officer time associated with the cancellation.

FA/250/18 Water Charges

Currently Business Stream provide water to the Parish Council at a cost of £5,248.10 per annum for all buildings and allotments. Whilst all suppliers buy water at the same wholesale rate, the retail services are such that savings could be made. Since the English water market opened in April 2017, 25 companies have been granted retail licences, but only 15 are actively engaging with customers and pursuing growth. Utility Week (2018) Available at:- <https://utilityweek.co.uk/water-retail-market-reflecting-first-year/> [Accessed 17.07.18]

A fast growing Middlesborough company has offered rates that would provide a saving of £267.77 per year based on the consumption for 2017/18 demonstrating that some savings may be possible on the current supplier. However, to get the most competitive rates, a larger piece of work would need to be undertaken to obtain more quotations. Like with energy prices, there is often an attractive introductory rate which then increases in subsequent years, making the overall difference between suppliers minimal.

The Committee AGREED that the Clerk should speak with Business Stream to explore if there could be any reduction in charge, but otherwise to leave as is and review in one year's time.

FA/251/18 Hirers' Public Liability Insurance

Hirers of the Parish Council's facilities are required to provide a copy of their public liability insurance cover to be held on file, however, there are a handful of very small groups that are not constituted and who meet as a group of friends to enjoy activities of mutual interest, for example an art group and a French speaking group. These groups do not have their own public liability insurance and because of the nature of the groups are reticent to do so. The Parish Council's insurance company has advised that the groups can be covered by the Parish Council's public liability cover as long as there is a resolution from the Council to give authority.

The Finance and Administration Committee RESOLVED that small, none constituted groups that meet as a group of friends to enjoy activities of mutual interest will be covered by the Parish Council's Public Liability Insurance.

FA/252/18 Pension Provision.

The Principal Pensions Consultant for West Sussex County Council advised that North Horsham Parish Council has resolved to enrol all employees in the Local Government Pensions Scheme. If the Parish Council would like to change the resolution and offer a different pension scheme to new employees that would be possible. However, if office staff were offered the LGPS Scheme and Caretakers a different scheme there would need to be clear justification as to why one group had been offered a different pension to the other to mitigate any risk over the challenge of discrimination.

NALC Legal Topic Note 79 states that local councils can choose to contribute to a qualifying scheme such as the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Town and Parish Councils do not have a statutory obligation to participate in the LGPS but can choose whether or not to designate an employee for LGPS membership.

NALC highlight the National Employment Savings Trust (NEST) Scheme set up by the government.

LGPS

Career Average Revalued Earnings Scheme

Employer contributions - 21.7% of pensionable pay.

Employee contributions range from 5.5% to 8.5% of pensionable pay.

Statutory eligibility rights apply.

NEST

Government Backed Workplace Scheme.

Minimum joint contribution of 5%. A minimum of 2% from the employer, 2.4% from the employee, 0.6% from the government. The employer can pay more.

From April 2019 the minimum joint contribution goes up to 8%. A minimum of 3% from the employer, 4% from the employee and 1% from the government.

Qualifying earnings for the scheme is salary, wages, overtime and statutory

payments over £6,032 and up to £46,350 per year. The contribution is based on everything paid over the lower level and up to the upper level.

The employer has to collect and send the employers contribution to NEST. This needs to be checked with Capita.

AVIVA

Employer pension.

There is a charge to run the scheme and provide support services.

Employer contribution is a minimum of 2% of employers salary up to April 2019 when the minimum contribution rises to 3%.

Qualifying earnings are over £10,000 per year, but employees must be offered an opportunity to join if they earn less.

It would be prudent to get professional advice before making a final decision. Any consideration needs to go to full Council for final agreement.

The Finance and Administration Committee RESOLVED to defer this item until professional advice had been obtained.

FA/253/18 Personal lockers for Roffey Millennium Hall

At their meeting on 9th August 2018, the Personnel Committee agreed that personal lockers should be provided for staff at Roffey Millennium Hall as there was concern that staff were not able to securely lock away personal possessions. Expenditure for lockers would need to be agreed by the Finance Committee as lockers were not put forward as part of the budget process for 2018/19.

Office staff and Caretakers have the ability to secure their possessions. Having canvassed staff, they expressed concern about where lockers would be sited as space is at a premium in the office and staff thought that they would not use lockers sited in another part of the building. It was felt there wasn't a need for personal lockers at this time, but suggested that the situation could be reviewed in the future.

The Committee AGREED that as there was no need for personal lockers at this time and that the matter would not be pursued further unless an identified need became apparent.

FA/254/18 GDPR Compliance

E-mail addresses

The Parish Council were advised by the Data Protection Officer to offer e-mail addresses consistent with the parish council's domain name. ie Cllrx@northhorsham-pc.gov.uk. to all Councillors. This was agreed by the Parish Council. This allows all e-mails associated with the Parish Council to be easily identified.

UKHost4U provide the domain name 'northhorsham-pc.gov.uk' which hosts e-mail services (directed to Office 365) and website services (wordpress). To add mail box accounts to the domain will cost £48 per councillor per year. (Total £912).

Councillors are advised not to store personal information on their computers. To avoid this, documents could be put on Sharepoint or One Drive which enables files to be uploaded to a cloud based system and then the user is sent an e-mail with a link to the folder. To provide e-mail/ One Drive/ Sharepoint would cost around £1,000 per year. In reality most documents are in the public domain and could be put onto the Parish Council website as they are now.

The Council works as a body corporate, therefore correspondence usually comes through the Proper Officer. Unless directed by the Council, individual Councillors do not have the authority to act as individuals on behalf of the Council, therefore, whilst having consistent e-mails is helpful for residents and strengthens the 'corporate brand', it is not mandatory. Correspondence received by Councillors that cannot be answered using information from Council documents should sent to officers so that it can be brought to the attention of the full Council, if appropriate, or so that the officer can give a fuller answer.

Documents sent to Councillors from officers has personal information redacted or alternatively if the personal information is needed for the Council to make a decision, it is circulated on orange paper and marked confidential.

There appears to be no need for e-mails with a 'northhorsham-pc.gov.uk' suffix as long as Councillors have separate e-mail accounts for Council work, especially in light of the ongoing cost.

There doesn't appear to be a need for a specific platform for documents when most can be accessed from the website.

Photocopier

As the photocopier is in an open, public office the 'secure print' facility has been put into operation which enables users to enter a pin number to release the print. Scans of documents are held on the hard drive. The photocopier supplier will either destroy the hard disk in the photocopier at the end of its life or give it to the Parish Council to destroy.

Councillors noted the information supplied by the Clerk and RESOLVED not to pursue specific Cllrx@northhorsham-pc.gov.uk e-mail addresses due to the cost and to use the existing methods of sharing documents with awareness of GDPR.

FA/255/18 Date of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 11th October 2018 (Scheduled).

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.05 p.m.

..... Chairman

.....Dated