

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 12th MAY 2020

The meeting was held remotely using Zoom software.

PRESENT: Cllr. Beck (in the Chair), Bunyan, Fairweather, Fletcher, Gilbert and Warne.

Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying:

Members are required to declare any interests, dispensations, predetermination or lobbying on items on this agenda. Members are reminded that changes to the Register of Interests should be notified to the Clerk. He notified those present that the meeting was being recorded as a Clerk's aid.

164/19: Internal finance check:

Cllr. Beck confirmed that the internal finance check has been completed and everything was in order. He would sign the bank statements and end of month reconciliation documents retrospectively as soon as current restrictions are lifted and conditions allow.

165/19: Authorisation of payments made after the April meeting:

A list of payments totalling £7,652.61, made after the April meeting is filed with these minutes.

166/19: Transfers of monies between accounts:

No transfers had been required.

167/19: Cheques for Payment:

Cheques for May were signed for payment as per the list filed with these minutes. It was proposed by Cllr. Beck, seconded by Cllr. Fletcher and agreed to authorise payment of the cheques as presented.

These included:

Policy and Resources	£7,588.39
Burial and Properties	£ 488.56
Environmental Management	<u>£ 669.77</u>
Total	£8,746.72

168/19: Review of Banking Arrangements:

The Clerk had expressed continued frustration at dealing with the High Street banks when attempting to make changes to the signatories or increasing the amount of payments made online. She had made enquiries with other parishes and with the financial advisor at KALC, both of whom had suggested Unity Trust Bank as an alternative. The Committee had been sent a link to the Unity Trust website to further ascertain what the bank had to offer. It was confirmed that more online payments could be made still ensuring that the safeguards required by our financial regulations are met. Following a full discussion, Cllr. Beck proposed that we open a current account with Unity Trust Bank, this was seconded by Cllr. Gilbert and agreed. It was also agreed that the accounts we currently hold with HSBC and Lloyds would remain open.

169/19: Earmarked Funds:

Members had been provided with copies of the earmarked funds. The figures were discussed. The funds earmarked for the Community Centre had increased significantly, due to the grant of £400,000. from TWBC, received at the end of March. It was also noted that funds earmarked for car parks had now reached £184,800 which has been set aside to cover the cost of refurbishing the Town's three car parks as and when necessary. It was proposed by Cllr. Beck, seconded by Cllr. Fletcher and agreed to approve the figures as presented, a copy of which is filed with these Minutes.

170/19: Insurance Renewal Quote:

The Committee had been provided with the renewal schedule and associated documents. We benefit from a substantial reduction as we have a three-year long-term agreement. A summary of policy changes to the schedule had also been received, it was noted that a Coronavirus exclusion had been added to the policy with effect from 10th April. It was agreed the Clerk would investigate if a claim could be submitted, the for loss of revenue from the hire of Vestry Hall, prior to that date. It was proposed by Cllr. Beck, seconded by Cllr. Bunyan and agreed to accept the quote of £9,298.99 including insurance tax, as presented. It was also agreed to approve the additional expenditure necessary to provide an increase to the Fidelity Guarantee limit as soon as a quote is received.

171/19: Tanyard Dental Surgery Update:

Cllr. Fletcher reported that as soon as business restrictions are lifted and property transactions can progress, we would be proceeding with the purchase, as per the decision made at the March Full Council meeting in Sissinghurst.

172/19: Security of additional funds held:

The Clerk had circulated a draft investment policy to the Committee. A great deal of discussion followed regarding the security of monies currently held by the Parish Council. The current regulations only provide protection on funds up to £85K per financial institution. The purchase of the Tanyard Dental Surgery would see the earmarked funds reduced by £230K but would offer the financial security of the land obtained. The Committee concluded that any surplus funds, those being defined as funds not earmarked for specific projects, or budgeted funds for expenditure, would be split between the banks that the Council hold their accounts with, to spread any risk. Members made a few amendments to the draft investment policy which would be circulated to all members before the Full Council meeting on Thursday, this would allow the policy to be included in the annual review of all policies.

173/19: Items for Information:

Cllr. Warne advised she had received an email from a resident regarding the Bedgebury Forest free car park at the end of Park Lane. It had been closed temporarily due to the lockdown, but concerns had been raised by residents of Park Lane that it would remain permanently closed. This was likely to result in visitors using that entrance, parking on the narrow public highway which is unsuitable and would hamper access for local farm machinery and emergency vehicles. The residents of Park Lane are requesting the Council support their efforts in convincing the Forestry Commission to reopen the car park, when the current restrictions are lifted.

Cllr, Bunyan stated that after sixteen years being Chairman of the Planning & Preservation Committee, she would not be seeking re-election as Chair, but would be proposing on Thursday, that Cllr. Smith take on the role.