

PEWSEY PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE STRATEGY GROUP MEETING
HELD ON 2nd MAY 2018
IN THE PARISH OFFICE, BOUVERIE HALL, PEWSEY

PRESENT: Cllr Mrs Hughes (Chair), Cllr Mrs Stevens, Cllrs Mrs Hunt, Kerry Pycroft, Cllrs Deck, Eyles, Ford, Haskell, Morris and Smith.

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllrs Mrs Carmichael-Owen, Cllr Mrs Dalrymple, Alison Kent (Clerk).

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Executive Strategy Group.

1. NOTED ABSENCE: Cllrs Ann Hogg, Cllr Carder, McGarry and Stevens.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST: Cllr Kerry Pycroft, Cllrs Haskell, Morris and Smith on item 6 and Cllr Haskell on item 10.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST F & GP COMMITTEE MEETING: All being in agreement, the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2017 were signed as a true record by the Chair.

4. FINANCE:

Current balances as at 2nd May: Santander Current Account £103,444.29

Santander Community Instant Reserve Account: £69,670.90

Lloyds Business Account: £60,540.00

Santander Community Instant Reserve Account (Admin): £7,075.59

Authorisation of cheques as listed were proposed by Cllr Mrs Hughes, seconded Cllr Mrs Hunt, all in favour.

There were no quotations for acceptance.

Budget printouts to 31st March had been circulated. The first half of the precept had been received. Cllr Haskell asked whether adjustment had been made for the clerk's increased hours, Cllr Mrs Hughes advised that the budget for the clerk had been set last year but it would be amended for the 2019/20 precept. Reserves had been accumulated over the last few years but for 2017/18 expenditure exceeded income by £1,000. With the year-end position and confirmation of reserves, Cllr Haskell suggested that moving forward, when ringfenced funds are spent, they should be built back up over a period of the following ten years (increasing with RPI), to spread funds further.

Cllr Mrs Hughes advised the Fixed Term Deposit had now matured and the funds were in the normal business account. She felt that £60,000 should be placed on some form of deposit again so Cllr Mrs Stevens was investigating accounts and would bring a recommendation to Full Council.

5. BUSINESS PLAN AND PRECEPT 2019/20: The precept would be considered at the October meeting. The clerk had issued the Business Plan to all the normal organisations. Cllr Mrs Hughes explained it would be updated annually and asked for the Chairs and Vice-Chairs to think between now and August about specific plans, both short-term and long-term up to 2021, to be included. General expenditure would always be contained within the budget. Specific plans looking ahead would be needed for the use youth services and community enhancement reserves. Cllr Smith said it was good to project costs and set timescales as well. Cllr Morris asked for guidance on the boundaries for increasing the precept, the clerk advised that Parish Councils were not capped at present.

6. TO SET ALLOTMENT FEES FOR 2018: Cllr Morris noted that the annual fees were invoiced in retrospect and felt that this provided a challenge when speaking with tenants as to whether they wanted to continue or not. He asked whether consideration should be given to changing invoicing to the start of the growing season. The clerk advised that the invoices for September 2018 would have to be issued as they relate to the current year, however a further invoice could be issued in January 2019 to cover the period of September 2018 to January 2020. It was agreed that this request should be considered in full at the next Environment Committee. Cllr Haskell felt that whatever income was received, should be spent on the allotments. Cllr Mrs Hughes proposed the fees remain the same for 2018, seconded Cllr Mrs Stevens, all in favour.

Cllr Morris advised that a meeting of the newly formed allotment association had taken place and were looking at erecting noticeboards and a suggestion box. A longer term idea was for a parking or turning place to be considered at Bert's Meadow.

7. VILLAGE RANGER: Since the last Full Council a further meeting had taken place with Mr Ellis and Cllr Smith advised that no agreement had been reached as it had soon become apparent during the discussion that the cost would be in excess of the approved budget for the year. The costs had included a substantial retainer (tool costs, storage, clothing, communications, insurance, vehicle, livery and running costs) as well as the hourly rate. At that point the negotiating team knew that they would not be able to reach an agreement and were not in a position to negotiate. Cllr Mrs Hughes explained that Mr Ellis had provided too much information, building in his overhead costs. It was agreed that Mr Ellis would be of great help to the council and more than capable of undertaking the tasks required and assisting the clerk in aspects of her role. The clerk reconfirmed that the position of ranger was not part of the one-year review for the structural changes, however Cllr Haskell stated that the contract would be reviewed annually. Cllr Morris noted the initial budget was set at £7,000 but had increased, Cllr Haskell replied that the council had substantially underestimated how much it was likely to cost. Cllr Smith agreed the budget was set at £7,000 however there was £20,000 in the reserves for Community Enhancement. The Council had a vision with a lot of work and time spent on reviewing the NDP and looking at ways of how the Council's aspirations could be reached. The Council had been naïve in working out how much this would cost.

Cllr Mrs Hunt felt the demands were unreasonable. The clerk had been asked to detail the work required. If the role was split for an odd job person and assistant clerk, it would likely cost more. Cllr Deck said that Mr Ellis had been chosen as he could perform both types of work. Cllr Morris asked whether the retainer had been apportioned to the hours spent contracted to the Council. Cllr Kerry Pycroft asked members to think about what the Council wanted for Pewsey.

The clerk expressed her disappointment that the process had taken so long to get to this point. A clear vision and job description had been agreed, with only two applicants for the contract. She felt the Council were being blinded by figures rather than the benefit to the community with ample funds available.

Cllr Smith agreed that funds were available which would be reviewed when the next precept was set. Members did not wish to have a vehicle with Council livery as the contract was with Mr Ellis' company. Cllr Eyles stated the role should be centred around what the Council required. Cllr Haskell suggested a renegotiated hourly rate should be pursued with a maximum established that the Council was willing to pay, if Mr Ellis did not accept this then he would have to move to one side. Cllr Smith advised that Mr Ellis did have other contracts, but not this type of work. Cllr Ann Hogg had advised the contract was checked by a HR solicitor which was proposed by Cllr Haskell, seconded Cllr Smith, all in favour.

Cllr Morris proposed the negotiating team be given a maximum of up to £32 p/h, plus materials and fuel, seconded Cllr Mrs Hunt, 9 for, 1 against.

8. ASTER OWNED PLAY AREAS: The Parish Council had been in discussion with Aster regarding the licence agreements at Aston Close and Broadfields play areas. Aster owned the land and the Parish Council were responsible for the supply and maintenance of the play equipment. Aster offered to lease the land to the Parish Council for 21 years for a peppercorn rent, at a cost of £2,000 per area to cover all the legal fees. They had no plans for the areas at this time. Cllr Eyles did not agree to the proposal as the transfer was not the freehold, and proposed that this offer was not pursued, seconded Cllr Ford, all in favour.

9. NORTH STREET & HALLGATE HOUSE CAR PARKS: Cllr Mrs Hunt advised that the draft terms had been received and were proposed for a term of 7 years from 1st April 2018. In general, the terms were fine but clarification was required on the ownership of the red marked bays at Hallgate House car park and also to carry out the outstanding requests for a camera inspection and clearance of the drainage gulleys as verbally agreed with Highways. It was agreed the Council was happy to renew the leases but would not sign them until those requests were carried out.

10. LAND AT WAY'S WAY: Mr Sadler had been cutting the hedge at Way's Way for several years as a kind gesture to the Parish Council. He wished to take on the ownership of the land and had obtained a market valuation of £500 at the request of the council. Cllr Mrs Hughes proposed that the Parish Council be happy to proceed with the sale as long as Mr Sadler covered all legal costs, seconded Cllr Mrs Stevens, all in favour.

11. PHOTOCOPIER PROVISION: The clerk advised that the renewal of the photocopier was due within the next year and Cllr Mrs Hughes sought authority of the council to delegate the renewal to the clerk, which was agreed.

12. TO CONSIDER ANY DONATION REQUESTS: Cllr Haskell proposed that £20 be spent out of the Chairman's Allowance towards the tree planting in memory of former Cllr Coppard, seconded Cllr Morris, all in favour.

Cllr Haskell asked for the request from the Heritage Centre to be postponed as more information was required.

13. CORRESPONDENCE:

Mrs Nobbs – a request had been sent to update the litter pick schedule to include the new bins at Ball Corner and the BMX site as there were now 24 bins to empty. Cllr Eyles did not agree with the request and would speak with her.

There were no other items of general information.

14. FULL COUNCIL INFORMATION: Cllr Haskell asked members to return the AGM nomination forms prior to the Full Council on 8th May. He would be attending the Primary School Council on 11th May at 2.15pm, along with Cllr Eyles and Cllr Smith.

15. ITEMS VIA THE CLERK: The clerk reminded members that the Annual Parish Meeting would take place at 6.30pm on 8th May, prior to Full Council.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.37pm after thanking members for attending.

Signed.....

Date.....