

## **POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**7 January 2013**

**Meeting Room 1, Chandler's Ford Methodist Church, Winchester Road,**

**Chandler's Ford**

**7.00 pm – 9.07 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Olson (Chairman); Councillors Mrs Atkinson, Boyes, Broadhurst, Davidovitz, Ms Grajewski, Hughes and Pragnell

APOLOGIES; Cllr Ms Gault, Luffman and Mrs Roberts

In attendance – Stephen Mursell, Parish Clerk.

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No members stated a declaration of interest.

### **2. MINUTES**

It was agreed that the minutes for the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 29 November 2012 be signed by the Chairman as an accurate record.

### **3. MATTERS ARISING**

The Chairman asked members if there were any matters arising not already covered by the agenda items.

The Parish Clerk reported that he had undertaken further investigations with regard to potential deposit rates for the investment of surplus funds. At the suggestion of members the Clerk had investigated potential rates at Lloyds Bank and also Co-Operative Bank. The Clerk reported that Lloyds Bank offer 0.10% in line with other high street banks; however the Co-Operative Bank offers 0.18% for public sector deposits. Members were reminded that the current deposit rate with Eastleigh Borough Council was 0.60% which still remains competitive.

It was AGREED that:

1)The Parish Council would continue to utilise the deposit account at Eastleigh Borough Council whilst the current interest rates remain unchanged

### **4. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS**

The Clerk advised members that individual Member Dispensations forms had been signed by those present at this meeting in respect of disclosable financial interests. This would be particularly relevant when discussions take place on the Parish Council budget and setting the precept for 2013/14.

## **5. NEWSLETTER**

The Clerk advised members that progress had been made with the first edition of the newsletter over the Christmas period and with the number of articles for inclusion the first edition will be eight pages, instead of the four pages anticipated.

Members were advised that future editions may revert to four pages as there may be fewer activities to report on, or alternatively advertising may be obtained to offset the additional printing costs should the newsletter remain at eight pages.

Members were reassured about the increased costs of printing the newsletter as it was stated that the quality of the draft newsletter is excellent and it will prove to be a colourful and informative publication. Feedback will be sought from residents to ensure that future editions prove to be equally informative for residents and report fully on the activities of the Parish Council. It was suggested that a meeting of a group of members be arranged to review the process of publishing the first newsletter and reviewing feedback from residents to agree the format and content of future newsletters.

It was AGREED that:

- 1)The increased cost of printing the first edition of the newsletter is acceptable as it was important to report fully on the activities of the Parish Council
- 2)That a working party of members be called after the first edition of the newsletter is distributed to review the process of publishing the newsletter and to agree the future content of the newsletter, including advertising

## **6. PROGRESS WITH ASSET TRANSFERS**

This agenda item is reported confidentially due to the commercial sensitivities of the transfer of assets to the Parish Council, however it was noted that no members of the public were in attendance at the meeting.

## **7. GRANT FUNDING APPLICATIONS**

The Clerk advised members that an application had been received from Eastleigh Fundays Group who were seeking a grant towards organising fundays in Chandler's Ford during the summer with an anticipated venue in Velmore. The grant requested would be a contribution towards the running costs of the activities, including insurance costs and room hire. Members noted that the activity would benefit the residents of Velmore, however they considered that any activities such as this should be complimentary to the activities organised by Eastleigh Borough Council in the summer holidays.

Members also noted that to comply with the conditions of applying for and potentially being granted funding from the Parish Council the group would need to provide

additional information.

It was AGREED that:

- 1)The Parish Clerk would obtain confirmation from the group as to the Charity number for the group
- 2)The Parish Clerk would obtain audited accounts together with a balance sheet and bank statements from the group
- 3)The Parish Clerk would enquire of the Area Co-ordinator for HEWEB as to whether funding has been provided to this group in the past or whether there is an application pending for this year

## **8. "HAVE YOUR SAY"**

The Parish Clerk advised members that through Cllr Davidovitz he had been made aware of this scheme. The scheme is essentially a participatory budgeting event where Parish Council or other community groups can host a meeting at which community groups present requests for funding of projects and the community agrees which group or groups should receive funding and the amount of the funding.

The Clerk advised members that all the funding is provided by Hampshire County Council and the amount of funding available could be up to £2,500 for each County Councillor represented in the parish. The Clerk advised members that this would be an opportunity for local groups to benefit from additional sources of funding and by hosting such an event it would enable the Parish Council to further improve its profile in the community. Members also felt that this would be a good opportunity for the Parish Council to raise its profile with the County Council.

It was AGREED that:

- 1)The Parish Clerk would contact Hampshire County Council to agree in principle that the Parish Council host a participatory budgeting event
- 2)The Parish Clerk secures the funding during the financial year 2012/13 subject to confirmation by the County Council

## **9. WATER HYGIENE REPORT**

The Clerk introduced his report and confirmed that at the request of members he had undertaken further research concerning water hygiene and regimes of water quality testing. The Clerk advised members that there appeared to be a risk of the food material that would allow Legionella and other bacteria to potentially sit in the hoses at the allotment plots when the criteria set out by the HSE is applied. The Clerk also advised members that Eastleigh Borough Council had previously undertaken a risk assessment of the allotment sites to assess the risks associated with the Legionella bacteria and had considered the risk at the sites to be low.

The Clerk had also contacted companies who specialise in water quality testing and had sought guidance on the need to undertake water testing and the likely costs. The advice received was that dead legs in the system could result in the Legionella bacteria being present and where the water is supplied through multiple pipes then a number of samples may be required to be taken. The risk was mitigated as the hoses are mains fed and with a flushing regime this will mitigate any risk, however a disinfection of the hoses would further mitigate the risk. Each water sample would cost approximately £40.00 to sample so a judgement can be made as to whether any Legionella bacteria are present and in what quantity to determine the risk and any future testing.

Members felt that the Parish Council as a public authority had a responsibility to undertake further assessments of the risk.

It was AGREED that:

- 1)The Parish Clerk would contact Eastleigh Borough to obtain a copy of the risk assessment previously undertaken on the allotment sites as to the water quality
- 2)The Parish Clerk would contact three suitable contractors to undertake a survey of the allotment sites to enable an estimate of the water testing regime that would be recommended
- 3)The Parish Clerk will report back to this Committee following these actions

## **10. PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE**

The Parish Clerk updated members with the website traffic during December compared with November. The Clerk advised members that as expected the traffic tailed off towards the end of December and the overall visits to the site were down in December. Despite this the time spent on the site by each visitor and the number of page views increased in December.

Cllr Grajewski enquired as to whether there was information on the number of “robot” visits to the website and as to whether there was information on the identity of visitors to the website.

It was AGREED that:

- 1)The Parish Clerk would make further enquiries through Emango as to whether such information could be obtained on the user traffic to the website

## **11. PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET 2012/13**

The Parish Clerk advised members as to the background to the setting of the budget for the next financial year and that the budget had been presented to this committee later than in previous years. This was because the Borough Council had advised Parish Councils to delay setting the budget and agreeing the precept until the position with regard to Council Tax benefit relief became clearer. It became apparent towards the

end of November that Parish Councils would be adversely affected due to changes in benefit relief despite central government previously giving assurance that this would not be the case.

ClI Atkinson then provided further information that despite an increase in the number of band D properties in the parish the effect of loss of Council Tax benefit relief being passed on to Parish Council would result in a reduction of the precept. Discussions had taken place between officers of Eastleigh Borough Council and Parish Councils to agree a scheme whereby Parish Councils would receive financial support in the form of a grant from the Borough Council to ensure that the precept was not adversely affected.

The Parish Clerk and Cllr Atkinson had attended such a meeting when the details of the financial impact on the Parish Council were discussed. It was noted that the financial impact of changes to Council Tax benefit could result in Parish Councils requesting individual calculations of such changes on a monthly basis. It would prove very difficult for the Borough Council to undertake these calculations for every Parish Council and it would be more pragmatic for the Borough Council to effectively underwrite any potential loss of Council Tax benefit to the Parish Council resulting in no reduction in precept for Parish Councils.

The Clerk then highlighted to members items on the budget that required further explanation over and above the information contained within his report. Members were concerned that once the assets had been transferred to the Parish Council that there was sufficient reserves to enable the Parish Council to carry out its intentions to improve assets and enhance local services. Members were of the opinion that the budget heading Managing Assets should contain a contingency of £50,000 titled Contingency Asset Funds to replace the budget line of £10,000 for Replacement of Assets. Members also felt that the existing general contingency of £30,000 should remain and therefore the budget should show a deficit of £40,000 funded by existing reserves.

It was AGREED that:

1)The Policy and Finance Committee will recommend to the Parish Council meeting on 21 January 2013 that the budget is approved subject to the amendment of the contingency fund for Managing Assets

## **12. FINANCIAL UPDATE**

The Clerk introduced the latest financial update and took questions from members on items of expenditure and income.

It was AGREED that:

1)To note the financial update