

THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held via by Videoconference via the Zoom Platform on Friday 12th February 2021 at 10.00am

In the Chair: Cllr Dashper

Present: Cllrs. Haley, Rainbow and West. In Attendance: Mrs V Waples, Clerk and two members of the public as observers of the meeting.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 10.00am thanked all for attending and read out the notice for reporting at virtual meetings of the parish council.

1. Apologies of absence –
 - a) Council to receive apologies – there were no applicable apologies of absence as all Committee members were present.
2. Declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests -
 - a) To receive declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest in items on the agenda and their nature including gifts of hospitality exceeding £25 – there were none received.
3. To approve the minutes of the Committee Meeting of 9th December 2020 as previously circulated –
 - a) 9th December 2020 Public - the public set of minutes were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting that took place and agreement was forthcoming for the Chairman to sign them outside of the meeting, aif.
 - b) 9th December 2020 Confidential – the confidential set of minutes were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting that took place and agreement was forthcoming for the Chairman to sign them outside of the meeting, aif.
4. To consider the following as part of the Council's Year-End Process:
 - a) To review the Council's Financial Risk Assessment 2020-2021 – *Paper 2021/1* – the meeting reviewed the document and agreed that the risk level to Staff (work overload) and Data Protection Impact Assessments were appropriate and that amendments to the Governance with particular emphasis on GDPR and Internal Controls for internet banking and transfers between accounts were acceptable. It was agreed that the document was a true reflection of the financial risks facing the council and the manner in which they would be mitigated. It was understood that this was a live document and changes would be included in line with changes in legislation. All agreed that future amendments should be highlighted for ease of review, aif.
 - b) To review the Council's Risk Management Strategy 2020-2021 – *Paper 2021/2* – the meeting reviewed the Council's Risk Management Strategy for 2020-2021 and noted that amendments had been made to the document to reflect that this was a live document and that overall it provided an accurate assessment of the management of risks carried out by the Parish Council. The strategy would be updated to reflect recent reviews. The next review would be scheduled for February 2021 or earlier should any new risks arise. The document as submitted was adopted by the Committee.
 - c) To review and agree the effectiveness of Internal Control – *Paper 2021/3* – the meeting reviewed the effectiveness of its internal control and agreed that the Internal Control Policy as proposed should be adopted with the amendment that it be reviewed after six months. It was felt that the document was an effective tool for Council to enable it to review its processes and to support the audit process.
 - d) To review the effectiveness and scope of Internal Audit – *Paper 2021/4* – the meeting reviewed the effectiveness of the internal audit carried out for the previous year and found that the proposed works to be carried out for the year 2020-2021 were adequate and appropriate. It was confirmed that the scope of the review covered independence, competence, relationships and audit planning and all agreed that the overall structure of the internal audit was satisfactory for a Council the size of Thurston. It was noted that given the

So signed by the Chair at the meeting of 26th March 2021

increase in income and expenditure the council would be automatically subjected to an intermediary audit by the external auditors but that this would not impact on the internal audit process or scope that would still be required.

- e) To confirm the recommendation of the appointment of the Council's Internal Auditor – the meeting was in full agreement, having reviewed the Internal Audit Terms of Reference and Internal Audit Plan supplied, to recommend to full Council the appointment of Mr T Brown, CPFA to carry out the internal audit for the year ending 31st March 2021.
 - f) To review the Council's Reserve Policy – Paper 2021/5 – the policy as written with reference to the holding of Reserves and the level that was appropriate for the Council was agreed by all with a recommendation carried to adopt the policy. It was noted that the Practitioners Guide as issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance now had a new clause which contained guidance on the need to have a General Reserves Policy in place which required the review of the level and purpose of all Earmarked Reserves. It was further agreed that the Earmarked Reserves currently held should be fully explored and Council should make every effort to hold a minimum of 3 months' worth of General Reserve as a policy requirement, aif.
 - g) To review the Council's Policies, Procedures and Protocols as per Appendix A – the meeting reviewed the policies as per Appendix A and subject to minor amendments found them to be relevant and up-to-date, aif. It was agreed that the Equality and Diversity Policy would be reviewed and brought back to the Committee once the Clerk had reviewed the provisions under LTN – Elections and Co-Option, aif.
 - h) To note that the Protocols and Meeting Notices as per Appendix B have been updated on the Parish Council's website – the meeting noted that the list of protocols and meeting notices as amended and as listed under Appendix B had been uploaded onto the website. The meeting was made aware that the emergency legislation introduced last year for the holding remote meetings was time limited (expires 7th May 2021) and that unless it is amended councils will have to return to meetings in person. SALC and NALC are lobbying for this legislation to be extended and/or the introduction of legislation to allow for both remote and hybrid meetings to become a permanent feature of local government.
5. To consider matters coming forth from Committee Members:
- a) It was agreed that the March Policy and Resources Committee Meeting would also cover a review of the Assets under Insurance Cover and the level of Fidelity Guarantee at which the Council operated versus anticipated balances in April 2021.
6. Date of future Meetings: to confirm the dates:
- a) Policy & Resources Committee Meeting – Virtual – 26th March 2021 at 10.00am.
7. There being no further business to transact, the Chairman closed the meeting at 10.56am.

Appendix A - Agenda Item 4h)

The following policies were reviewed and are to be found on the Parish's website at the following address:

<http://thurston.suffolk.cloud/parish-council/policies-procedures-and-strategy>

Accident Reporting & Investigation Policy
Appeals Procedure – Annexe to Complaints Policy
Complaints Policy Procedure
Climate Awareness and Environmental Policy
Data Protection Policy
Disciplinary Procedure
Disciplinary Rules
Dispensation Policy
Document & Electronic Data Retention Policy
Health & Safety Policy
IT and Electronic Communication and Social Media Policy
Lone Worker Policy
Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons Policy
Subject Access Request Policy
Subject Access Request Procedure

Appendix B - Agenda Item 4i)

Virtual Meeting Protocol
Member / Officer Protocol
Pre-Planning Application Protocol
Public Participation in Council Meetings Protocol
Reporting at Council and Committee Meetings Protocol
Notice on Reporting at Virtual Meetings of the Council
Notice on Reporting at Meetings of the Council