



SOUTHWATER PARISH COUNCIL

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DRAFT Minutes of the Extraordinary Finance & General Purpose Committee meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 29th January 2020 in the Council Chamber, Beeson House, Southwater, West Sussex, RH13 9LA commencing at 7.00pm.

Present: **Councillors:** M Neale (Chairman), G Watkins, R Stranks, S Lewis, R Williams, G Cole, G Scoon, D Moore, N Knott, (*arrived at 7.25pm*), P Flores-Moore, C Vickers and H Timson

Members of the Public: 14

Clerk: Dawn Spouge

Press: Not Present

ACTIONS

The Chairman asked those present to turn off their mobile phones for the duration of the meeting, unless in an emergency, when they should go through the Chairman. In the event of a fire alarm sounding, everyone should evacuate the building via the exits indicated.

The Chairman advised that the meeting was being recorded.

- 1. Public Forum – (maximum 3 minutes per person with an overall limit of 15 minutes). All parishioners wishing to speak, must make their name known to the Clerk prior to the commencement of the meeting.**

Mr Colin Young stated the following:

In anticipation of the figures for next year's budget, he asked that the Council consider any additional spend, especially how it was attributed and particularly on Councillor Watkins warning at the last meeting about additional costs towards legal fees. He would be particularly interested to understand whether the expenditure had been pre-authorized and more importantly whether it was necessary. He hadn't seen the budget figures, was anticipating it. There is concern that the Council may be spending more precept to cover previous errors, on which he stated it had a track record. He had other questions that he would ask at the SPC meeting that would follow.

The Chairman stated that he noted Colin Young's comments and that the Council would go through the figures next. He stated that he took exception to the comment made by Mr Colin Young towards the Council, Mr Young had said they had a "previous track record of errors", but would note that for now and wouldn't say anymore at this time

2. Apologies for Absence

None.

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Minutes – To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 18th December 2019

Councillor Scoon proposed approval of the above Minutes, seconded by Councillor Cole and **AGREED** with **9** votes in favour and **2** abstentions. *(Councillor Knott had not arrived at the meeting to vote at this point).*

5. Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on the 18th December 2019 not covered elsewhere on the agenda

None.

6. Budget and Precept 2020/2021 – To consider and approve the budget

Budget and notes circulated with the Agenda. Further addition circulated prior to the meeting.

The Chairman informed the committee that since the last meeting there had been some amendments to the budget, one of which was a potential increase in staff salary from 1% to 2%. Councillor Watkins suggested that the Council increase salaries in line with SALC's recommendation of 3%. Other amendments related to a potential saving of £10,000 for a change in the management of services and an inclusion of £10,000 to cover any potential legal challenges. A discussion ensued about the various options and what effect it would have on the precept whereupon Councillor Watkins proposed budgeting for an anticipated 3% national pay rise to all staff employees as per advice from SSALC – Sussex and Surrey Association for Local Councils. Seconded by Councillor Cole and **AGREED** unanimously.

Further discussion took place on the proposed changes to the budget to which Councillor Watkins reminded the Committee that a lot of work had been done previously on the initial budget with which he was content and the only amendment he believed necessary was an increase for potential legal challenges. He continued to say that he could not see how a reduction in the savings for the management of services could be factored in without complicated calculations. Therefore, he proposed to accept the original precepted amount presented at the December F&GP Committee meeting, in addition to this to add £10,000 for possible future legal challenges from residents and 3% as agreed above for possible national pay rise for employees. This would be a gross precept budget of £693,102 for 2020/21 and a percentage increase in Band D of 4.29%.

The above was seconded by Councillor Scoon and **AGREED** with **10** votes in favour and **2** against.

Clerk to inform HDC.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 19th February 2020

This meeting was followed by the FPC meeting at 7.30pm.

Clerk