**Minutes of a meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee**

**Held via Zoom**

**On Tuesday, 23 February 2021 at 7:00pm**

**Members Present:** Councillors A Sharpe (Chairman), B Story (Vice Chairman), P Deason, R Ellison, M Finch, R Wood

**In attendance:** Helen Goodwin, Clerk to the Council; Mr Will Dalton, as applicant for the role of Trustee of the Sunninghill Trust.

The clerk advised all present that the meeting was being recorded and the recording would be kept by the Clerk until the minutes were approved at the next meeting, after which the recording would be deleted.

**7822 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None were received.

**7823 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**The Chairman asked to receive any Declarations of Interest in accordance with the adopted Code of Conduct. Cllr Story declared a pecuniary interest in the library consultation which is to be discussed in AOB.

**7824 MINUTES**The minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee held on 24 November 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed as such.

**7825 APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEE TO THE SUNNINGHILL TRUST**

Mr Will Dalton was introduced to the committee and the role of Trustee was discussed, taking into account the requirements as drawn up by the Sunninghill Trust, and the experience and expertise of Mr Dalton. After questions and conversation with Mr Dalton he was thanked and left the meeting. The committee discussed the appointment further and agreed unanimously to put Mr Dalton forward to the Sunninghill Trust as Trustee.

**7826 CLERK’S UPDATE**

1. The contract with David Norman has now been signed and we are just waiting on his risk assessment.
2. The Committee was reminded that, as reported previously, previous employee Mrs Jane Shanahan applied for early pension on ill health grounds. The Clerk took advice from HALC as to whether it was the responsibility of the Parish Council to provide the necessary Independent Medical Examination. It became apparent this was the case and the Clerk appointed a suitably qualified and registered medical practitioner who has now carried out the assessment and reported back to the Berkshire Pension Scheme, at a cost to the Parish Council of £450.
3. All parishes have been asked by the borough to draw up their own protocol for the procedure to be put in place in the event of the death of a National Figure (Operation Bridges). The Clerk and Assistant Clerk have been preparing the Sunninghill & Ascot parish protocol and, when finished, it will be circulated to all councillors

**7827 MEETING ATTENDANCE**

The attendance register for the six months from the date that meetings resumed at the beginning of September 2020 until the present time was discussed. When parish council meetings resumed in September 2020 efforts were made to engage all councillors in using Zoom, however it is clear from the attendance register that some councillors have attended very few meetings and one councillor has not attended any. Some councillors not attending have not sent apologies and the Chairman emphasised the requirement to send apologies and to give a reason for non-attendance as the parish council is expected to consider whether such a reason is acceptable. In addition, some councillors have not kept the clerk updated of changes of address.

After discussion it was agreed that the Clerk should write an email to those who had attended five meetings or fewer in the last six months reminding them of their duties as councillors and of the requirement to send apologies, with good reason when they are unable to attend. They should be asked to consider whether they wish to remain on the Parish Council and whether they are still able to make the commitments required. The councillor who hasn’t attended any meetings should be approached to discuss why they have not attended and reminded that a councillor who doesn’t attend any meetings for a period of six months, without providing a reason which is acceptable to the parish council, ceases to be a councillor. The committee agreed that, should that councillor wish to remain on the parish council they must give a reason that is acceptable to the council.

**7828 FINANCIAL REPORT**

Councillor Wood presented the Financial Report for the quarter to 31 December 2020. We have ample reserves and we are not spending at the rate that we originally envisaged; we have no concerns about the budget set for next year and can continue to operate even with the Covid situation.

**7829 INTERNAL AUDIT & INVESTMENT POLICY**

The Internal Audit report was presented and the committee noted the requirements set out by the auditor. Bank reconciliations should be signed off by a councillor and this will be put into practice. An Investment Policy has been drafted which will formalise what we do with our temporary surpluses to ensure: they are put somewhere that is covered by the Financial Ombudsman; they are sterling-based and; as much of a return as possible is achieved.

**7830 2021/22 MEETING SCHEDULE**

The draft Schedule of Meetings for 2021/22 was presented, along with the draft terms of reference for the proposed CIL committee. It was noted that the Victorian Street Fayre is scheduled for 14November but this is Remembrance Sunday; the date will be changed to 21 November.

Discussion took place on what is required of a CIL committee and whether it should be a committee or a working group, as well as whether all councillors should be expected to attend CIL meetings, or the group should be a smaller number. Taking into account the considerable CIL funds building up and the work that will be required on future CIL projects it was agreed that come form of CIL group should be set-up and meet separately from the parish council, but that the decision as to the form that group should take should be put to the full parish council.

It was agreed unanimously that, with the one change to the date of the Victorian Street Fayre, the draft Meeting Schedule should be presented to the next full Parish Council meeting on 24 March.

It was noted that, as things currently stand, in-person meetings will need to resume from 07 May. The Clerk and Assistant Clerk are making enquiries to find an alternative venue as, should that be the case, the parish office is not suitable for meetings to be held in a Covid-safe environment.

**7831** **Any Other Business**

(i) The Chairman advised that, as part of the borough’s current Library Consultation document, Sunninghill library is proposed for closure. The borough is looking to save costs in all regions; they have plans to modernise and digitise the library offering and their representative has indicated she is happy to come to the parishes to explain what this will entail. For Sunninghill, it specifically means the closure of the library. The building which houses the library is the owned by the Sunninghill Reading Room Trust, of which the vicar of Sunninghill and two church wardens serve as Trustees. The Trust also owns the house next door to the library which is rents out. The borough leases the library from the Trust. The terms of the Trust are that the room exists for library and books. There has been considerable response to the proposal on social media and by email from residents unhappy about the possible closure. The head teacher at St Michael’s school has also written in support of keeping the library open and setting out how invaluable the library is to the school. The Sunninghill Reading Room Trust has written to the borough in support of keeping the library open. It has been suggested that the Reading Room Trust might work with the Durning Trust, which contributes to the upkeep of the Ascot library. It was noted that the borough has a statutory obligation to provide a library service and that the Ascot library is too far from the Sunninghill library to be a feasible alternative for anyone living in Sunninghill with mobility issues.

The Chairman will set up a meeting with the borough representatives to invite them to give the committee more information on the reasons for the proposed closure and the basis for their decision. Members of the Reading Room Trust and the Durning Trust will also be invited, should they wish to attend.

(ii) An approach has been made by Thames Valley Police asking if the parish council would be willing to contribute to the cost of an ANPR camera which they propose to site within the parish. This issue has been discussed in detail at the monthly Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) meetings which the Clerk attends, although only in relation to siting a camera in Sunningdale parish. The information regarding the specific location of the cameras is sensitive as it is imperative that the criminals the cameras are intended to target are not made aware of the locations. The cameras are very small and attached inconspicuously to a lamp post or traffic lights. All police forces use these devices, which are particularly useful to counter organised crime such as ‘County Lines’ drug networks. Number plates of specific known criminal cars are ‘marked’ and the cameras flag-up when marked cars pass them. Because of the proximity of our parish to the M3, M4, Surrey and Hampshire, there is a considerable amount of organised crime in, and passing through, our area and this has increased in the last few years. There are a lot of cameras in Windsor and Slough, but none at present in Ascot. The Clerk will approach Sunningdale Parish Council to ask whether they intend to fund a camera.

The cameras cost £6,000 each and the parish council is being asked if it will consider funding half of this amount, with the remainder funded by the police themselves. It will need to be considered, should the parish council be in agreement with providing the funding, whether it is appropriate to use CIL funds or precept. The matter will be put to the full parish council for a decision.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.30pm.

Councillor Allison Sharpe, Chairman