RIPLEY PARISH COUNCIL

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17.12.2020 Full Council Background Paper

Agenda item 5: *Casual Vacancy*

Eligibility for office
To qualify for election as a Parish Councillor, and to hold this position, an applicant must be: A British, Irish or qualifying Commonwealth citizen, or a citizen of any other member state of the European Union[1] and on the relevant day (the day of nomination or election) have reached 18 years of age or over. They must also meet at least one of these four qualifications:

- on the relevant day and thereafter they continue to be on the electoral register for the Parish
- during the whole of the twelve months before that day, they have owned or tenanted land or premises in the parish
- during the whole of the twelve months before that day their principal or only place of work has been in the parish
- during the whole of the twelve months before that day, they have lived in the parish or within 4.8km (3 miles) of the parish boundary.

Disqualification
An applicant may be disqualified from standing (or being co-opted), if they are a paid officer or employee of that parish, have had bankruptcy restriction orders made against them or they have a previous criminal conviction with a prison sentence of three months or more.

Should there be one expression of interest, the council may choose not to co-opt the candidate. Should more than one expression of interest be received, the council may choose not to co-opt any of the candidates.

The council should resolve what information it requires from potential candidates so that each is working towards a defined target ahead of the meeting scheduled for 21st January 2021.

[1] Information correct on 11/11/2020

Agenda item 6ii: *Finance – Working Group report*

Present: Cllr Lisanne Mealing
Cllr Simon Moxon
Cllr Suzie Powell-Cullingford
Jim Morris, Clerk of the Council

Internal Audit Report
The council's internal audit had been carried out following a request for information to be provided and a subsequent phone call to discuss various items. The full report was circulated ahead of the meeting. The auditor had made the following observations:

- Information requested for the audit had been provided in full
- The council's VAT reclaim was up to date
- Accounting systems were well ordered and routinely maintained
- External auditor's report had been published on the website and noted in the Minutes
- Sample test of councillors' Acceptance of Office forms had been confirmed
- It was clear that the council takes its GDPR and privacy responsibilities seriously and had made every effort to comply with the legislation
- Council had confirmed its eligibility to use the General Power of Competence

There had been four items noted by the auditor for action in future:

- Standing Orders were based on a previous model – Clerk to update and table at a future meeting
- Duplication of Policies / old Policies published on website – Clerk to carry out work to website
- Accounting software shows insufficient general reserves – Clerk to carry out work in software package
- Date of issue of the Inspection Notice (published to let members of the public know they may arrange to inspect the council's accounts) was the same date as the published start of the inspection period. This needs to be at least one day following the date of the Notice – Clerk to note

Budget 2021-22 & Precept Requirement
The Finance Working Group has assessed the council's projected income and expenditure for 2021-22. Significant savings are required in order to balance the budget. The parish Band D equivalents have decreased from 916.15 in 2020-21 to 902.75 for 2021-22. This alone means that the council needs a 1.5% rise in order to maintain current levels of funding. The Finance Group proposes a 6.5% increase in precept, bringing the total claim to £70,415, £78.00 per annum for a Band D property (increased from £73.24).

£499,825 has been received from the Public Works Loans Board (the loan was subject to a £175 admin fee). The council was able to secure the loan at 1.55% interest, bringing the length of the term down from 50 years to 25 years and saving the village £130,000 compared to the figure budgeted for.

The council is recommended to identify work and objectives that could be delivered by volunteers or via other goodwill. Sponsorship opportunities will be explored and promoted. The move from Rio House will create a significant saving. Regular updates will be given on the council's financial position and expected income and expenditure.

Agenda item 6iii: *Finance – Internal Audit*
Mulberry & Co's full Internal Audit Report is circulated to members with the Agenda.

Agenda item 6iv: *Finance – Budget 2021-22*
The Q3 workbook and associated supporting information is circulated to members with the Agenda.

Agenda item 6v: *Finance – Precept 2021-22*
Information on the council's proposed precept for 2021-22 will be discussed prior to this item at Agenda item 6ii.

Agenda item 6v: *Finance – Draft Agreement RPC/RVH*
The following advice has been given by SSALC's Honorary Solicitor:
The Agreement contains more provisions than we would normally include in such an agreement but the important points, such as the fact that the grant has to be used for a specified purposed and that the organisation has to account for how the funds are spent, are included.

Some of the other provisions, whilst it could be argued are not strictly necessary, do not detract from the purpose and intent of the Agreement and provide the normal protection for the Parish Council in ensuring that the funds are used for the purpose of the Village Hall works.

Yours sincerely

Roger Taylor
Wellers Hedleys

If this advice is acceptable to the council then no further action should be required until the Ripley Village Hall CIO has appointed its contractor.

Agenda item 7: *Policy Review*
i) Standing Orders. As per the conclusion of the Internal Audit, the council's existing Standing Orders are not based on the most up-to-date version available. They have been updated (hard copy circulated with Agenda) and can be compared against the existing hard copy that all members have on file. There don't appear to be any major changes except to the running order of the Orders themselves. Chapter 19

Handling Staff Matters is clearly designed to give reporting procedures to a council's Human Resources Committee. Ripley does not have one so this chapter has been left unaltered.
ii) Financial Regulations. No updates.

iii) Planning Policy. The council's Planning Policy has been heavily updated to encompass new directives brought about since the Guildford Borough Council Local Plan Strategy & Sites was adopted in May 2019, and the impending referendum on the Lovelace Neighbourhood Plan, which still carries significant weight in its current form.

iv) Risk Management Scheme recent published dates updated.

v, vi, vii) No updates to the Complaints Procedure, Freedom of Information Procedure, or Data Protection Policy.

viii) Council is asked to consider any alterations to the list of fees and charges. The Allotment fees will be for the calendar year 2022, and do represent a slight increase. Plot holders will need to receive notification of the price change, as is prescribed under one of the many Acts regarding provision of Allotments.

ix) Use of The Green. This Policy was adopted in January 2020, and is re-tabled for the council to assess whether it still reflects the council's objectives.