BRENCHLEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF BRENCHLEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT 11.30AM ON TUESDAY 24th OCTOBER 2023 AT MATFIELD PAVILION

Present: Cllr J. Buttery (Chair), Cllr C. Churchill, Cllr A. Dewdney, C. Brooks (Clerk)

1. To accept apologies for absence

None. It was noted that Cllr Wells is no longer on the Committee.

2. Review of the Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the meeting of 12th April were reviewed, all actions have been completed. These Minutes had already been approved, by the Full Council, and published.

3. To record declarations of interest in any item on the Agenda

None.

4. Review of Terms of Reference

The Committee reviewed the Terms of Reference, in place since December 2021, no changes were proposed, though it was noted that the number of Councillors may result in fewer members of the P&M Committee.

RECOMMENDATION to readopt the Terms of Reference unamended

5. Strategy and Forward Plan

The Committee in consultation with the Clerk, discussed the advent of a new Council in May 2024 and agreed that it would be more sensible for a Strategy and Forward Plan to be considered in year 1 of a Council's 4-year term which allows for an incoming Council to consider its own objectives and forward plan, with reference to the achievements of the previous Council.

6. Policies for biennial review

Policies have been updated with regard to email and website addresses and the new logo added.

1. Consideration of frequencies of review

Currently the Council reviews the core policies annually at the annual meeting in May but this is not a requirement, BMPC have not made any amendments in the last round and the Committee agreed that it makes more sense for the Council to review the Core policies in the May of year 2 and year 4 of their term of office. This means that a new Council will have a year to work within these policies before suggesting amendments and it will mean that an experienced outgoing Council will have set the policies that will last into the beginning of an incoming Council.

The Clerk advised that there is currently a revision of the Financial Regulations model and this would be brought to the Council when finalised.

The other polices are reviewed biennially, so half are done each autumn, which seems to be sufficient.

RECOMMENDATION that core policies are reviewed in year 2 and 4 of the Council term.

2. **Publication Scheme**

Open hours to be changed to show office hours and pavilion open hours.

RECOMMENDATION to adopt the Publication Scheme as amended

3. **Data Protection and Document Retention Policy**

No changes suggested.

RECOMMENDATION to re-adopt the Data Protection and Document Retention Scheme unamended

4. **Grants Policy**

No changes suggested.

RECOMMENDATION to re-adopt the Grants Policy unamended

5. **Complaints Procedure**

The Clerk advised that this policy has not been referred to, or tested, as no formal complaints have been received. It was noted that the complaints policy does not cover individual Councillors which are bound by the Code of Conduct and investigated by the Monitoring Officer and therefore a small amendment was made. There seems no reason to put the Chair's private address in this policy.

RECOMMENDATION to adopt the Complaints Procedure as amended

6. **Social Media Policy**

Small amendment made as there is no contact form on the website.

RECOMMENDATION to re-adopt the Social Media Policy unamended

7. **Environment, Sustainability and Climate Emergency Policy**

Following the activities of the Environment and Sustainability Working Party the Policy has been updated.

RECOMMENDATION to adopt the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Emergency Policy as amended

8. **Memorials, Plaques, Benches and Trees Policy**

The Policy was discussed and amended given recent experiences.

RECOMMENDATION to adopt the Memorials, Plaques, Benches and Trees Policy as amended

7. **Other policy reviews suggested**

With the LGA currently considering a new Code of Conduct (previously in consultation) and the Financial Regulations also being reviewed, the Clerk advised that at the commencement of the new Council term in May 2024 any new NALC Model versions of the core policies would be presented.

1. Code of Conduct

The Committee discussed in detail concern that there is no legal advice available, either via KALC or via the Council's insurers, to support Councillors who are subject to a complaint to the Monitoring Officer.

The Clerk advised that the Code of Conduct is reviewed by the MO who is indemnified to provide advice about breaches, whereas, KALC is not. Monitoring Officers will in most cases be happy to provide guidance to an individual councillor as the Code is specific to the PC and the PC must be wary of attempting any internal formal investigation or actions that might undermine the code.

The PC as a body owes Councillor a duty of care and will support them to ensure their wellbeing as far as possible, however Cllrs are not covered for legal advice or representation via the Council's insurance policy as there is no personal liability as a result of an MO complaint.

The Clerk and Chair would investigate the matter further to see where mentoring support might be provided, therefore the Code of Conduct would not be amended or re-adopted at this stage.

Action Clerk, Cllr Buttery

2. Standing Orders

The Committee discussed the addition of the NALC model clause commonly used to limit the review of resolutions to 6 months after they are made, as Clause 8.

RECOMMENDATION to adopt the Standing Orders as amended

8. New Policies

The Committee noted that the Council has all the recommended core policies in place however the Clerk had raised the benefit of a tree policy given the relative frequency that issues arise where requests are made for work to trees for reasons other than tree health or safety.

RECOMMENDATION to adopt the Tree Policy as drafted

9. Risk Management

The Policies and Risk Schedule was reviewed.

1. Finance and Governance Risk Assessment review

The Clerk has reviewed this document and had suggested some amendments.

RECOMMENDATION to adopt the Finance and Governance Risk Assessment as amended

2. Assets and Buildings Risk Assessment review

The Committee discussed a significant number of comments and amendments to the document suggested by the Clerk. It was noted that all Councillors are responsible for risk management.

RECOMMENDATION to adopt the Assets and Buildings Risk Assessment as amended

10. Council Management

The Committee discussed various management issues:

- Potential impact of low number/inexperience of Councillors following May 2024 election, including impact on staff – it was recognised that current Councillors may not stand for re-election
- Review of Staffing levels generally – no changes proposed
- Review Committee Structure and frequency of meetings – it was suggested that the Finance Committee may need to meet more often but the current structure worked well
- Increased use of contractors to deliver Council responsibilities, eg play inspections, IT support. – the Clerk advised that the increased use of professional contractors was advantageous both to the Council in terms of availability of support and to staff to release them from tasks.

- Dealing with correspondence to the Council – the Committee accepted that the Clerk would continue to respond to correspondence direct where appropriate and would bring matters to the attention of Councillors or the Full Council if necessary.

- Agenda management – Cllr Buttery advised that Agenda items should be provided by Councillors (to add to the statutory items as listed by the Clerk in the Draft Agenda) and that only items that are for resolution or relevant updates should be on the Agenda.

11. Date of next meeting: Spring 2024