HANNINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

[DRAFT] Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at the Village hall, Hannington
Tuesday 12th January 2016 at 7pm

Present: Chairman Councillor Simon Taylor, Councillor Janusz Hertz, Councillor Clare Kinnear, Cllr Karin Jardine-Brown, Cllr Robert Finlayson, Chris Pottinger (Clerk)

1. Apologies for absence & declaration of interest
   Cllr Donald Sherlock gave his apologies.

   Chris Pottinger, Clerk, declared an interest in item 3 (b) Review of Parish Clerk Remuneration, and offered to leave the room while the item was discussed.

   No members of the public attended the meeting.

2. Minutes of Meeting held 10th December 2015.
   The Council decided that as the January meeting was specially called to discuss Budget 2016/17 and Review of Parish Clerk Remuneration, and that no members of the public were present, the two items: -
   • Minutes of Meeting held 10th December 2015, and
   • Matters Arising
   would be deferred to the next standard meeting of the Council to be held Tuesday 9th February 2016. Accordingly, the meeting did not consider the completeness and accuracy of the December Minutes.

3. Finance
   3.(b) Review of Parish Clerk Remuneration.

   Draft Minutes of the December 2105 Council meeting on Budget 2016/17 included the following paragraph: -
   "At the last meeting of the Parish Council 8th December 2015, the Council deferred discussion on the Budget 2016/17 to a Special Parish Council meeting to be held on 12th January 2016 at which “a separate report would be received on the appropriate level of remuneration for the Parish Clerk, and what effect such a review might have on the level of Precept 2016/17”.

   Members had received a detailed paper in advance of the meeting, prepared by Cllr Hertz, that addressed the following five issues and questions: -
   i. Role of the Hannington Parish Council (HPC) Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer?
   ii. Is there a national pay or salary scale for our Parish Clerk?
   iv. Communities Parish and Local Councils (CPALC) – PayCheck an unbiased system to assess how many “spinal points” the role is worth.
   v. PayCheck Hannington Parish Clerk Job Evaluation as at 29th December 2015

AGREED

1. The Parish Council would adopt the recognised National Joint Council (NJC) pay scales for Town and Parish Clerks, and that the Clerk’s remuneration would fall within Scale LC1 for Parishes with incomes up to £25,000 per annum.

2. Scale LC1 has a range of hourly rates for a Clerk that can be applied by a Council depending on the experience, expertise and knowledge of the employee. The Parish
Council agreed the current Clerk would be paid at Spinal Column Point 25, an hourly rate of £11.55. This would be effective from 1st April 2016.

3. The Parish Council approved the remuneration budget of £3,003 in 2016/17 for the role of Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer, based upon a pro rata rate of £11.55 per hour at a standard working week of five hours.

4. As best practice, the Clerks remuneration to be formally reviewed each year.

5. After consideration of the Budget Report elsewhere on the Council’s Agenda, agreed in principle to meet the full additional costs (£1,236) through an increase in the Precept 2016/17.

6. The Standing Orders to be changed at Paragraph 3 ‘Proper Officer’ to reflect the decisions taken at 1, and 4, above. See also Minutes at paragraph 4 (a) below.

3.(a) Budget 2016/17
The Clerk had circulated, in advance of the meeting, an outline Budget 2016/17, based on the latest financial position in the current year. The report was not substantially different to that previously circulated to the December meeting, projecting a cash balance as at 31 March 2017 £4,012.

The report highlighted that of the ‘Operating Costs’ totalling £3,650 in 2016/17:-
* 68% (£2,500) were legal requirements over which the Council had only limited discretion
* 14% (£500) were expenses where the Council had an ‘obligation’,
* leaving only 18% (£650) that could be described as ‘entirely discretionary’, and even that related to the maintenance of the village green.

ACTION: notwithstanding the above classifications, the Council agreed to undertake a thorough review before the beginning of the next financial year (1st April 2017) of the history, justification and level of items of expenditure in the current Budget in order to establish if they are still justified ‘in meeting the Council’s aims, objectives, obligations, and commitments’. This review would also seek to identify if there were other ‘worthy causes’ that should be supported, but are not at present.

The council were also mindful of two other key considerations when setting the Budget 2016/17, and hence the Precept requirement:-
• The number of high cost, one-off items of expenditure that have to be met from the Council’s General Reserve/cash balance, and
• The effect these have had in recent years in reducing the General Reserve/cash balance from £5,900 as at 31 March 2014 to the £3,800 being predicted as at 31 March 2016; a fall of £2,100 (35%).

On reviewing the draft Budget 2016/17, the Council concluded that though progress was now being made in resolving the ownership of the Village green, it was likely that it would not be completed in the current financial year and that therefore half the legal costs (estimated at £750) would fall in 2016/17.

AGREED
The £750 legal costs in 2016/17 should be met from an increase in the Precept.

AGREED
To increase the Precept request from £3,400 (being £3,279 plus £121 Council Tax Support Grant) to £5,500 (being £5,397 plus £103 Council Tax Support Grant), in order to meet the costs of the review of the remuneration of the Clerk and the legal costs for the transfer of the village green.

This decision increases the precept for a Band D property in Hannington from £18.02 per annum (35p per week) to £29.02 per annum (56p per week). This equates to an increase in the total Council Tax on a Band D property from £1,379 (2015/16) to £1,388 (2016/17), an increase of 0.65%; on assumption that all other preceptors remain unchanged.

AGREED
To request the full Parish Council Grant of £1,100

ACTION: Clerk to submit the completed request forms to BDBC by the 31st January deadline.

3.(c) Cheques for payment

The meeting agreed the following three cheques for payment:-

- To Hannington Parochial Church Council £250, being contribution towards maintenance of churchyard (cheque number 328)
- To Hannington Farm £780 (incl £130 VAT), for mowing village green (cheque number 329)
- To C Pottinger £34.99 (incl £5.83 VAT), reimbursement of expenses – printer cartridges (cheque number 330)

The Council also agreed to reimburse Cllr Hertz for the CPALC membership fee of £30 (incl £5.00 VAT) incurred in undertaking the job evaluation review of the Clerk. [cheque number 331]

4. Review of Governance Documents

4.(a) Standing Orders

The Council noted that the Standing Orders were last reviewed in September 2104. The Council was advised by the Clerk that he had not been notified of any ‘guidance’ or legislative changes since then that required an amendment to the current FRs. However, the review of the remuneration of the Clerk had identified the benefit of being more explicit about the role and responsibility of the Clerk.

AGREED
Under Section 3 Proper Officer

Amend Paragraph 3a) by striking out existing paragraph ‘The Council’s Proper Officer shall be the Clerk. The Clerk shall fulfil the duties assigned to the Proper Officer in standing orders.’, and replace it with ‘The Hannington Parish Clerk is a statutory office holder that fulfils the role of “Proper Officer” to the council which is part of local government. The clerk is the council’s principal executive and adviser, and is responsible for the administration of its affairs. As the council’s proper officer the clerk is responsible for implementing council policy; ensuring the council acts within the law; advising the council on all aspects of its work and may have delegated powers of decision making especially in urgent situations. The Clerk in our case is also the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO)”

Amend Paragraph 3b) striking out existing paragraph ‘The Council’s Proper Officer shall do the following...‘and replace it with,

‘The Council’s Proper Officer shall carry out the duties described, however, these are not limited to the following’
i. The Parish Council has adopted the recognised National Joint Council (NJC) pay scales for Town and Parish Clerks, and that the Clerk’s remuneration would fall within Scale LC1 for Parishes, currently defined as those with incomes up to £25,000 per annum.

ii. As best practice, the Clerks remuneration to be formally reviewed each year.

4.(b) Financial Regulations
The Council noted that the Financial Regulations were last reviewed in September 2104. The Council was advised by the Clerk that he had not been notified of any ‘guidance’ or legislative changes since then that required an amendment to the current FRs. However, the review of the Budget 2016/17 had identified the benefit of being more explicit about the treatment of unspent provisions at the end of the year.

Under Section 4, Budgetary Control and Authority to Spend
Paragraph 4.3 reads, ‘Unspent provisions in the revenue or capital budgets for completed projects shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year.’

AGREED
Paragraph 4.3 is extended to read,

‘Unspent provisions in the revenue or capital budgets for completed projects shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year, ….but will be taken into the General Reserve as represented by the cash balances held at the year end or be allocated by Council to any ‘Earmarked Reserves’, in accordance with paragraph 4.8.’

4 (c and d) Risk Register and Skills Audit
Risk Management
In advance of the meeting, the Clerk had circulated
a. the cover report that explained the generally accepted approach to Risk Management that was considered by the previous Council in July 2012
b. a copy of the Risk Register that was constructed in 2012 and last reviewed in April 2014.

The Clerk advised the meeting that there had been significant change since the review in April 2014; not in the nature of the risks the Parish Council might face, but in the status of the Established Controls detailed in the Risk Register, and hence the Further Actions the Council may consider are now appropriate.

Cllr Hertz suggested that two new ‘risks’ be added to the Risk Register; these being “ice and snow on the roads encountered by pedestrians and vehicle traffic”, and “floods. This raised the question ‘what is the Parish Council responsible/liable for? It can’t be held responsible for ice, snow and floods.’

The Clerk advised the meeting that whilst the Council clearly does not have any responsibility for these natural incidents arising, and does not have any liability with regards the outcomes from them, it can play a role in representing the residents and in trying to ensure the ‘authorities’ are both aware of the ‘risks’ and are taking the necessary corrective action. An example of this would be for the Parish Council to inform HCC Highways Dept where the Parish Council considered local roads were subject to icy conditions and to ask them to ‘salt the roads and to provide and maintain salt bins’. It is HCC Highways Dept’s legal responsibility to take action to ensure the safety of the roads.
The Institute of Risk Management defines Risk Management “as an attempt to reach out into the uncertainty of the future and bring it under control, in order to achieve the objectives of the organization.” Any action taken in this way by the Parish Council does not replace or reduce the ‘responsibility’ of a resident or road user to notify the ‘authorities’ themselves viz potholes in the road.

DECISION:
For the next meeting in February, the Clerk is to provide clarification as to the Parish Council's roles and responsibilities so that the Council can agree what its objectives shall be for the immediate future and for the four year period of the current Council.

Once the objectives have been agreed, the Council will be better placed to identify what the risks are that threaten the Council from achieving them.

**Skills Audit**
In advance of the meeting, the Clerk had circulated a copy of the Skills Audit report considered by the previous Council in February 2014. At the end of that report was a table that identified the ‘assessment’ eg ‘met/NOT met’ across eleven different ‘skills’ together with a statement where support could be sought if necessary.

**DECISION:**
As with the Risk Register, this item is deferred to the next meeting in February. This allows the Council to discuss what skills were needed, having agreed what Parish Councils ‘objectives’ are.

5. **Dates of Next Meetings in 2016/17**

- Tuesday February 9th 2016.
- Tuesday May 10th 2016
- Tuesday September 13th 2016
- Tuesday December 13th 2016
- Tuesday February 21st 2017

The meeting ended at 8.35pm