

FINANCE, ASSET & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance, Asset & Resources Committee held in Ellesmere Town Hall on Wednesday 16th January, 2019 at 10.30am.

PRESENT: Councillors: Cllr R Hartley (Chair), G Elner, P Goulbourne, D Lunn, Mrs E Peers and Mrs J Williams
Mandy Evans – Town Clerk
Phil Smith – Assistant Clerk

FAR-16/18 To Receive Apologies and Reason for Absence.

No apologies had been received.

FAR-17/18 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests in Items on the Agenda

Cllr P Goulbourne declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to the grant applications by the Ellesmere Sculpture Initiative and Plantation Wood Group, and to the funding request for Ellesmere Library, for consideration as part of agenda item 5 – Budget Deliberations for 2019/20.

FAR-18/18 Grant Dispersations

None received.

FAR-19/18 Budget and Precept Deliberations 2019/20

The Town Clerk explained that the Committee was being asked to consider the draft budget for 2019/20, and put forward recommendations to a special budget meeting of the Town Council on 28 January 2019. The draft budget estimates for 2019/20 and explanations had been circulated with the agenda. The draft budget as presented was suggesting a one per cent increase in the Council Tax precept.

The Committee went through the draft budget estimates, and a number of questions were asked in relation to telephone costs, civic expenses, grounds maintenance, the gardening contract and CCTV – for which the Town Clerk was able to offer clarification.

In relation to Town Council salaries, the Town Clerk reported that three members of staff were at the top of their existing spinal column point, and agreement was needed on whether they should move up to the next pay scale in their range. It was suggested that the Staffing & Governance Sub-Committee be asked to meet prior to the Town Council budget meeting to consider this and make any recommendations. However, the earmarked budget of £52k should be sufficient.

In respect of the budget for Tuesday Market costs, it was clarified that this related to cleaning and refuse collection. Town Hall staff were now no longer involved in the set-up and set-down of the Market. Concerns had been raised at the last Town Council meeting regarding the accounts that had been submitted by All Together Ellesmere, and it was felt that after 1 April 2019 no further

payments for Tuesday Market costs should be made until proper accounts had been received.

In terms of Grants, the Town Clerk confirmed that the figure budgeted for included a 'grant' of £14,220 to the Cemetery Working Group for the running of the Cemetery. Consideration was given to applications for grants/donations in 2019/20 from the Ellesmere Sculpture Initiative (Eglantyne Jebb project), Ellesmere Summer Festival committee, Ellesmere Youth Project, Fizzgigs (for the Winter Festival), Ellesmere Brownies Group, Ellesmere In Bloom, the Plantation Wood Group, Royal British Legion and Crane Counselling. It was proposed that each of the applicants, with the exception of Crane Counselling, be awarded a grant/donation of £250. It was agreed that the £500 left over in the Grants budget be moved to the Town Council Contingencies budget.

In response to questions to Town Council income, the Town Clerk agreed to provide a breakdown to Members of what this relates to.

The Cemetery Working Group budget estimates were considered, and the Town Clerk reported that Ellesmere Rural Parish Council had confirmed their share of the contribution towards the running of the Cemetery. Provision had been made for the new pathway and the inspection of headstones/memorials.

Consideration was given to two requests for Town Council funding/financial contributions in 2019/20:

- (i) Re-development of Swan Hill Depot – Shropshire Council was asking for a contribution of £10k for a feasibility study towards the re-development of Swan Hill depot for visitor/café facilities for the Mere/Cremorne Gardens. Members recognised the value that the development could bring to the town, but that the Town Council should benefit from any income generated by the new facilities in return for making any contribution. It was noted that the realisation of the project depended on Shropshire Council being able to secure grant funding.
- (ii) Ellesmere Library – a request had been received from Bethphage for a contribution of £10k to cover a shortfall in the running costs of the Library situated at "Our Space". Members were concerned that there was very little information and no financial accounts to support the application, and that there might be an expectation in future years that the Town Council would continue to financially support the Library. It was noted that a proportion of users of the Library were residents of surrounding villages/parishes, and it was suggested that Bethphage should approach the respective Parish Councils for a financial contribution.

The Town Clerk advised that any funding of these requests could be taken as one-offs from Reserves. Details of the current Reserves were provided, and there were sufficient balances to support such expenditure.

RESOLVED – to RECOMMEND to the Full Council

- (a) that the total Town Council budget for 2019/20 be increased by £5,464 (equivalent to 1% increase in the Council Tax precept) to £212,300;**
- (b) that all the grant applications for £250 be approved, except for Crane Counselling;**
- (c) that the Grants budget be reduced by £500 to £16,220, with the Town Council Contingencies budget being increased by £500 to £2,500;**
- (d) that £10,000 be taken as a one-off from reserves for a contribution towards a feasibility study for the re-development of Swan Hill Depot;**

(e) that £5,000 be taken as a one-off from reserves for the support of Ellesmere Library at "Our Space", with the expectation that Bethphage seek financial assistance from other Parish Councils in the locality and from other stakeholders.

(NB: Cllr P Goulbourne did not vote in respect of the applications for funding from the Sculpture Initiative, Plantation Wood Group and Ellesmere Library)

The meeting closed at 12.25pm

Chair:



Date:

25-4-19.