

FINANCE, ASSET & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Finance, Asset & Resources Committee held on Thursday 17th December 2020 at 10.30am.

PRESENT: Councillors: Cllr G Hutchinson (Chair), N Cull, G Elner,
P Goulbourne, R Hartley

Town Clerk and RFO: Jo Butterworth – Town Clerk
Deputy Clerk & Deputy RFO Jean Hynes

FAR-25/20 **To Receive Apologies and Reason for Absence**

RESOLVED – that the apologies received from Cllr J Frost & Cllr A Wignall be approved.

FAR-26/20 **Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests in Items on the Agenda**

Cllrs declared personal interests in some of the groups who had applied for grant funding, item 6d on the Agenda.

Cllrs N Cull and Cllr R Hartley are both members of Ellesmere Bowling Club.

FAR-27/20 **Grant Dispersations**

None received.

FAR -28/20 **Minutes**

It was moved by Cllr P Goulbourne, seconded by Cllr G Elner and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 15th October 2020 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

FAR-29/20 **Public Participation Session**

No members of the public were present.

FAR-30/20 **Budget Deliberations 2021/22**

(a) a 2019/2020 budget report up to the 30th November was circulated to all members prior to the meeting.

(b) **First Draft Expenditure Budget 2021/22**

The Clerk reported that Shropshire Council had circulated the draft 2021/22 Parish and Town Council, Council Taxbase figures early, which had enabled her and the Deputy Clerk/Deputy RFO to work through the draft budget based on a 0% Band D Council Tax increase.

The draft council tax taxbase for a Band D property will be 1482.04 for 2021/22 compared with 1487.25 for 2020/21, a decrease of -0.35% which equates financially to £810.00 less than last year. This means that to show a 0% increase in the Band D Council tax charge the 2021/22 precept request would need to be £230,383 compared to £231.193.

The Clerk shared her screen so that all councillors could see the RBS draft budget and went through each item in turn with the Clerk explaining the projections and reasons figures had been entered into the draft budget which are all explained in the budget notes.

Salaries

An additional 2% has been allowed for salaries, pensions and NI following advice from SALC, as well as annual increment rises for the Clerk & Deputy Clerk in line with the Town Council's Annual Increment Policy.

Staff Training

The budget has been increased from £955 in 2020/21 to £1,150 for 2021/22 to allow for training of new employees, to put some of the cleaning staff through NVQ's and to allow for £50 should it be necessary should the Clerk need an extension to her CILCA registration.

Computer Expenses

This budget has increased from £1,100 to £1,500 to allow for an increase in the Bookings and Accounts software package as well as the software to add the Town Hall diary onto the Town Council website, there has also been an allowance made for a new laptop.

Telephones

The Clerk reported that a contract for 2 of the Town Council phone lines was due to end in January 2021. 2 quotations have been received for cloud based phones as the Deputy Clerk has one and it has been invaluable for when she has worked from home. Her contract is on a 30 day rolling contract, so that all 3 lines can be placed with the same provider. The quotes were as follows:

Quote 1 for 3 phone licences £863.40 per year

Quote 2 for 3 phone licenses £630.00 per year

It was moved by Cllr G Elner, seconded by Cllr Goulbourne and

RESOLVED: To accept quote number 2, which was provided by iHub.

Licences

£280 has been allocated to this budget to cover the cost of Zoom meetings, should they continue in 2021/22.

Councillors Training Expenses

This budget has increased by £150 to allow for training of any new councillors following the elections in May.

Street Lighting Electricity

The Clerk reported that following the conversion of the Town Council's streetlights to LED the energy for 2021/22 will reduce by approximately £3,485. She also reported that when the inventory was created by Eon at the start of their contract many years ago, a streetlight had been omitted from the list meaning that the council actually owns 85 lights and not 84 as previously thought when the quotes for conversion had been sought in 2018. The Clerk has instructed the street lighting contractors to convert the additional light to LED for a cost of £240 plus Vat which will come from the 2020/21 budget.

Street Lighting Maintenance

This budget has reduced by £930 to £1,570, this is due to the new contract agreed by council and allows for 20 adhoc repairs, although the lights are new so should require little maintenance during the year.

Christmas Lighting

£7,000 has been allocated for Christmas lighting as the contract ends in December 2020. £7,000 was allocated in the 2017/18 budget for a new contract.

Gardening Additional Costs

The 2020/21 budget is overspent due to necessary maintenance to trees, so for 2021/22 it is recommended to increase the budget to £2,500.

Youth Provision

£3,250 has been included in the draft budget which was the proposed amount for 2021/22 from The New Saints proposal which was circulated to council in November. An outreach project has been completed for 2020/21 and will be presented to council on Monday 4th November for them to consider if they would like to continue working with TNS for 2021/22.

Grants

The Clerk had looked through the grant applications prior to drafting the budget and recommended that £1,150 be allocated. It was later agreed (see the grant applications minute below) to recommend to full council that an additional £250 be budgeted for making the total £1,400.

VE Day

The Clerk explained that the VE Day budget for 2020/21 was £300, but no events had been held due to Covid, she asked if there were any special events to be considered for 2021/22 and was informed that there will be an event to celebrate the towns Market Charter in 2021, members agreed to change the VE Day heading to Market Charter Celebrations and £250 should be allocated for the celebrations.

Licenses

The Clerk informed members that due to Covid and a reduced number of bookings at the Town Hall the PPL/PRS licence has been reduced, so she recommended reduced budget of £1,000 instead of the £1,500 allocated in 2020/21.

Uniforms

The budget has doubled from £100 to £200 for to purchase uniforms for the 3 members of staff that did not receive new uniform in this financial year.

Cleaning Materials

An additional £200 has been allocated to this budget to allow for additional cleaning products.

Building Maintenance

£7,000 has been allocated to this budget. There is money in earmarked reserves for the roof and Town Hall maintenance.

General Maintenance

This has been reduced to £7,000 from £14,000 and allocated to the building maintenance budget which was £0 last year.

Town Hall Wages and ER's Pension Contributions

An additional 2% has been allowed for wages, pensions following advice from SALC.

Cemetery Working Group

Salaries

An additional 2% has been allowed for salaries, pensions and NI following advice from SALC.

Printing & Photocopying

An additional £180 has been allocated to this budget to allow for printing costs as the CWG may want to do a survey in 2021/22.

Cemetery Expenditure

This budget has been reduced from £7,000 to £3,000 to reflect current projects that the CWG are considering.

All members were happy with the draft budget and agreed to **RECOMMEND** to full council that it be accepted. It sees the expenditure reduced by £13,481 compared to 2019/20.

c)Other budget considerations

Ear Marked Reserves

The Clerk shared a spreadsheet on her screen detailing the amount currently in the council's reserves accounts.

Reserves		
Account	Balance	
Santander	93,735.68	
No 3 Account	95,682.52	
No 2 Account	18,378.06	
Total	189,418.20	
Ear Marked Reserves		
Town Hall Roof	40,000.00	
Town Hall Maintenance	25,000.00	
TH Toilet Water Damage	700.00	
Library	1,250.00	
Lobby	30,000.00	
Youth Provision	1,232.00	
Elections	2,250.00	
CCTV	5,000.00	
Neighbourhood Fund	1,329.43	
Neighbourhood Fund	3,707.00	
Neighbourhood Fund	12,385.19	
CWG	52,000.00	
	174,853.62	
Minus CWG	52,000.00	
Total E/M Reserves	122,853.62	
General Reserves	66,564.58	
Predicted 2021/22	45,855.00	
	112,419.58	

She recommended that a new title of Town Hall Capital Reserve be created and that the £65,000 in the Town Hall roof, maintenance be grouped together under the one title. All members agreed to **RECOMMEND** this to full council.

She went on to report that the general reserves policy states **the advised level of general reserves held by the Council is half of the annual precepted figure to fully cover 6 months' expenditure**. The council's general reserves are lower than the general reserves policy suggests it should be, but with the amount projected to remain from the 2020/21 budget that they should be close to the required amount.

Earmarked reserves of £2,250 for election costs for the 2021/22 budget were previously agreed when considering the 2020/21 budget (minute number FAR 24/19).

The Clerk informed members that she had contacted Shropshire Council to enquire about the 2020/21 Neighbourhood Fund monies, she is awaiting a response, these funds will be earmarked once the figure is known.

A discussion took place to consider whether a percentage increase in the precept should be requested from Shropshire Council and if so, how much of an increase. All members agreed that a 0% increase would be good, but a slight increase to cover the rate of inflation would be a far more sensible option.

It was moved by Cllr N Cull, seconded by Cllr P Goulbourne and

RESOLVED: to RECOMMEND to full council a 1% increase in the Band D Council tax charge from £155.45 per year to £157.00 (equivalent to £0.03 pence per week) amounting to a precept amount of £232,687.

d) Grant Applications

Councillors had received copies of the grant applications (which had been date stamped when they were received by the Clerk) prior to the meeting.

Grant Applications 2021/2022			
Date Received	Organisation	Amount Requested	Project
15th October	2nd Ellesmere Brownies	1200	a) Enable children low income families to join Brownies. b) PGL Activity Day. c) Covid loses
19th October	Hope House Children's Hospice	250	Cuddle bed for end of life care
27th October	Fizzgigs	250	Community Productions
2nd November	Ellesmere Bowling Club	Not Specified	Health & Safety works
5th November	Ellesmere Branch of Shropshire Wildlife Trust	150	Feed the birds project for bird food & PPE

The Clerk informed members that there is normally an annual application from Ellesmere In Bloom, which has not been received this year as the group are going to be forced to retire if they are unable to recruit new members.

It was agreed that due to the loses incurred by the council due to Covid that grants of £250 for each applicant be awarded, except for the Ellesmere Branch of Shropshire Wildlife Trust, they will be awarded £150 as that is all they had requested. It was further agreed to budget an additional £250 for Ellesmere in Bloom, so that if they are successful in finding new members the work, they do for the town can still be financed.

It was moved by Cllr G Elner, seconded by R Hartley and

RESOLVED: to RECOMMEND to full council that £1,400 be included in the 2021/22 budget for community grants.

Cllr Cull felt that the presentation on budget documents presented in a user-friendly way to the public. The Clerk informed the committee that this will happen going forward as the Deputy Clerk as brought with her new skills to enable the documents to be presented much better.

The meeting closed at 12.05pm

Chair:

Date: