

FINANCE, ASSET & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance, Asset & Resources Committee held on
Tuesday 20th December 2022 at 7pm.

PRESENT: Councillors: Cllr G Hutchinson (Chair), G Elner, P Goulbourne, M Hancock, A Wignall,
J Howard and non-voting Member Cllr A Weeks.

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

FAR 12/22/01 **To Receive Apologies and Reason for Absence**

Apologies received from Cllr P Jones due to work commitments.

RESOLVED – that the apologies received from Cllr P Jones due to work commitments be approved.

FAR 12/22/02 **Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests in Items on the Agenda**

None received.

FAR 12/22/03 **Grant Dispersations**

None requested.

FAR 12/22/04 **Minutes**

It was moved by Cllr A Wignall, seconded by Cllr M Hancock and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 24th October 2022 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

FAR 12/22/05 **Budget Deliberations 2023/2024.**

(a) To consider budget report for 2022/23. Noted

(b) To consider Payroll Contract for 2023/24.

The Clerk report that tenders/quotes had been sourced for the outsourcing of Council's payroll services and had received the following:

Company No	Amount (Excl VAT)
1	£824.88
2	£1500.00
3	£1120.00
4	£364.00

All offer the same service except for company 1 who are unable to submit pension data which is a requirement of the contract. Company 2 would require a commitment of a 3-year contract. The Assistant Clerk reported that company 4 are the cheapest however, from experience their service has not always been up to the expected standard.

Following the comments regarding company 4, the Clerk recommended that council consider company 3's quotation for £1,120.00 as taking the comments regarding company into account the quote was the best value and they had previously provided a good service.

It was moved by Cllr M Hancock, seconded by Cllr A Wignall and

RESOLVED – to accept the quotation from company 3 for £1,120.00. The Clerk revealed to members that the successful company was Shropshire Council Payroll Services.

(c) To consider the Town Planters Contract for 2023/24.

The Clerk reported to members that 6 companies had been contacted for quotations, with only 2 companies able to provide a quotation.

Company No	Amount (Excl VAT)
1	£2,402.50
2	£1,766.35

It was recommended that the council consider awarding the contract to company 2 as their quote is the most cost effective and they had provided a good service in the past.

It was moved by Cllr G Elner seconded by Cllr A Wignall and

RESOLVED – to award the contract to company 2. Northwood Nurseries.

(d) To consider Gardening Contract Tenders for 2023/24.

The Clerk reported that due to the size of the contract and finance regulations this was advertised on Contracts Finder requesting sealed bids which 4 tenders were received and were opened by Cllr A Wignall and the Town Clerk on 12th December 2022.

Company No	Amount (Excl VAT)
1	£12,750.00 pa
2	£12,000.00 pa
3	£8,500.00 pa
4	£20,300.00 pa

Council agreed to award the contract to company 3 as their quote is the most cost effective.

It was moved by Cllr G Elner seconded by Cllr A Wignall and

RESOLVED – to RECOMMEND that Full Council award the contract to company 3. The Clerk revealed to members that the chosen contractor was Harlequin Services.

(e) To consider recommendations from the Staffing & Governance Committee for the salaries budgets for 2023/24 following their meeting held on 20th December 2022.

Following the Staffing and Governance Sub-committee meeting held prior to this meeting the following recommendations for the setting of salaries was considered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

An additional 5% be allowed for salaries, pensions and NI, as well as annual increment rises for the Clerk & Deputy Clerk in line with the Town Council's Annual Increment Policy. The Clerks contracted hours will remain the same, 25 hours for the Assistant Clerk and 30 hours plus a guaranteed 7 hours per week when required.

Budget for the Deputy Clerks SCP to increase from SCP19 to SCP 20 as of 1st April 2023.

Budget for the Town Clerk's salary to increase from SCP34 to SCP35 as of 1st April 2023.

NLW will increase as of 1st April 2023 for Cleaners, they will continue to receive NLW plus 4%, budget to decrease Cleaner/ Caretaking Assistant's hours by 2 hours from 20 to 18 hours per week as of 1st April 2023.

Caretakers will remain on SCP 8 for 28 hours per working week as of 2023/24.

The Cemetery Co-ordinator will remain SCP 15 as per his contracted hours for 2023/2024.

It was also reported that the Admin Assistant had successfully completed her probationary period and has taken on additional supervisory duties, so it was recommended to increase from SCP 16 to SCP 17 as of 1st April 2023.

It was moved by Cllr P Goulbourne, seconded by Cllr A Wignall.

RESOLVED: to approve all the recommendations received from the Staffing and Governance Sub-Committee.

It was moved by Cllr P Goulbourne, seconded by Cllr A Wignall.

FURTHER RESOLVED: to approve salary increase from SCP 16 to SCP 17 for the Admin Assistant as of 1st April 2023.

(f) To consider first draft 2023/24 expenditure budget for the Town Council's assets and services and work through the budget together.

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. The Clerk confirmed that the salary recommendations had been entered into the budget.

The Clerk confirmed that she had just received the draft council tax base for a Band D property which will be 1524.77 for 2023/24 compared with 1484.09 for 2022/23. This means that to show a 0% increase in the Band D Council tax charge the 2023/24 precept request would be £248,964.

Staff Training

The budget has been increased from £700 for 2023/24 to £1,300 for 2023/24 to allow for training of existing and new staff.

Stationery

This has increased from £800 to £1,000 as projected costs are higher for 2023/24.

Postage

The budget has been decreased from £300 to £75 due to using email rather than Royal Mail to send out.

Computer Expenses

This budget has increased from £1,100 to £1,400 so it allows for calendar on council website, Town Hall diary and accounts package.

Telephones

The budget has decreased slightly from £1,600 to £1,500 due to the initial outlay for new handsets.

Insurance

This budget remains the same.

Membership Fees

Members were asked if they wished to continue subscribing to NABMA

It was moved by Cllr G Elner seconded by Cllr A Wignall and

RESOLVED – to cancel membership to NABMA.

Members discussed the benefits and agreed to cancel the membership to Shropshire Union Canal Society.

It was moved by Cllr G Elner seconded by Cllr M Hancock and

FURTHER RESOLVED – to cancel membership to Shropshire Union Canal Society.

Members also agreed to cancel membership to Community Resource (formerly Shropshire Rural Communities Charity).

It was moved by Cllr A Wignall seconded by Cllr M Hancock and

FURTHER RESOLVED – to cancel membership to Community Resource (formerly Shropshire Rural Communities Charity)

The budget was the set taking the above cancellations into account reducing the budget by £450.

Legal Expenses

This budget has increased from £600 to £4,000 to allow for the Bar Lease renewal, extension to Cricket Club lease and to consider the asset transfer from Shropshire Council, advice on Berwyn View land and Ellesmere Town Hall.

Councillors' Training Expenses

This budget has been increased slightly from £500 to £700 to allow for the training of new Councillors.

Street Lighting Electricity

The budget has been decreased from £2,000 to £1,500 due to the savings made following the streetlights being converted to LED.

Street Lighting Maintenance

The budget has been decreased from £1,570 to £1,300, which is due to the current contract and allows for 20 adhoc repairs.

Christmas Lighting

£7,000 has currently been allocated for Christmas lighting as the contract is currently out for tender and due to end on 6th January 2023, although this will be reviewed when all tenders have been received.

Road Safety

Members suggested allocating £1,000 to allow for batteries for the VAS signs and the 20's Plenty campaign.

It was moved by Cllr G Elner seconded by Cllr A Wignall and

RESOLVED – to allocate a £1,000 budget for Road Safety.

Gardening Contract

This budget was reduced from £12,750 to £8,500 which is due to the newly awarded contract.

Health & Safety

This budget remains the same at £500.

Gardening Additional Costs

The budget has been increased from £2,500 to £5,000 to allow for additional tree works.

Street Furniture

The budget has increase from £500 to £1,000 to allow for the refurbishment of the benches.

Tuesday Market Costs

This budget remains the same however, the Clerk informed members that the Service Level Agreement which was signed in 2017 and financial assistance was only agreed up to 2022, this will be reviewed along with the service level agreement.

Play Area Expenses

This budget has been increased from £2,500 to £5,000 to allow for the purchase of new equipment.

Rates

This budget has been increased from £8,610 to £9,899 allow for the increase on the Town Hall rateable value.

Electricity

This budget has been increased from £6,850 to £8,000 to allow for the predicted energy price increase.

Gas

This budget has been increased to £7,100 to allow for the predicted energy price increase.

Town Hall - Building Maintenance

£7,000 has been allocated to this budget the same as 2022/2023. There is money in earmarked reserves for the roof and future maintenance projects.

Town Hall - General Maintenance

£7,000 has been allocated to this budget the same as 2022/2023. There is money in earmarked reserves for the roof and future maintenance projects.

Town Hall Wages and ER's Pension Contributions

Included in this budget is 50% of the Admin Assistant salary costs. An additional 5% has been allowed for wages, pensions.

Cemetery Expenditure

£4,500 has been allocated for Lodge Painting plus a contingency and a further £5,050 for Gravestones and £5,000 for land tests, has also been allocated.

The initial draft budget had a deficit of £23,241. If the precept was 5% then it would bring the deficit down to £10,793 following a discussion it was agreed to set at 5% increase in precept request and find the remaining amount from reserves.

It was moved by Cllr P Goulbourne, seconded by Cllr A Wignall and

RESOLVED: to RECOMMEND that council increase the precept for 2023/2024 by 5%.

(g) To consider 2023/24 grant awarding applications received.

Councillors considered the grant applications and agreed to make the following recommendations.

Organisation	Project	Amount Requested	Amount Granted
Ellesmere Girl Guiding	Jamboree	£500	£500
Ellesmere in Bloom	Town Planting	£1,200	£600

The Mayor agreed to donate £276.85 from her Mayor's Charity Account towards the Methodist Church Parent & Toddler Group.

The Bowling Club requested £11,832 for lamps and re surfacing of the pathway. Following a discussion, it was agreed to request that the Bowling Club come back in the next quarter with a smaller project which the Town Council could consider offering some support.

It was moved by Cllr P Goulbourne, seconded by Cllr A Wignall and

RESOLVED: to request that the Bowling Club submit an application in the next quarter for consideration.

Yarn Bombers submitted an application for £250 for a metal frame for a knitted Christmas Tree, however having no bank account which if they were eligible would be a policy requirement- this application was not granted.

RESOLVED: Not granted due to having no bank account.

The Library at Our Space requested £3,000 for library services and it was agreed that due to the current climate to request that they re-apply in the next quarter.

It was moved by Cllr P Goulbourne, seconded by Cllr J Howard and

RESOLVED: to re-apply in the next quarter.

Due to Ellesmere Farmers Market being a business which is against grant policy and them having no bank account which if they were eligible would be a policy requirement- this application was not granted.

RESOLVED: to RECOMMEND to full council that £1,100 be allocated in the first quarter of 2023/24 budget for community grants.

FAR 12/22/06 **Notification of external auditor appointment for the 2022-23 financial year for the 5-year period until 2026-27.**

The Clerk reported that PKF Littlejohn had been chosen as the Town Council's External Auditor for the next 5 years.

Noted.

FAR 12/22/07 **Business Rates Valuation, Ellesmere Town Hall.**

The Clerk updated members that as of 1st April 2023 there is a £7,500 increase on the rateable value of the Town Hall for 2023/2024. The Clerk reported that following her check case with the Valuation Office that the decision has been received stating that their decision is that there have been no physical changes to the building and that the current rateable value remains the same for 2022/2023. If council wish to submit a legal challenge this must be done by 14th April 2023.

The challenge is a legal process with strict rules, which needs to be fully prepared. It has been time consuming to get to this point and it was felt that a professional company like the one that originally approached the Town Council should be used to achieve the best possible outcome.

It was moved by Cllr P Goulbourne, seconded by Cllr A Wignall and

RESOLVED: to source the services of a Commercial Company to carry out a legal challenge.

FAR 12/22/08 **Exclusion of Press and Public.**

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

RESOLVED - that in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and Section 100 (A) of the Local Government Act 1992, the public and press be excluded for the remainder of the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the Acts.

FAR 12/22/09 **All Together Ellesmere & Ellesmere Town Council Service Level Agreement.**

Council reviewed the Service Level Agreement and recommended that the following amendments:

- a) 1.2a needs to be amended to take out *Town Council Caretakers and Caretakers Assistants No longer setup/take down the stalls just for the Tuesday Market.*
- b) 1.2b take out.

The Clerk pointed out that as of 2016 Council agreed to fund costs of Skip Hire and the cleaning for 5 years which was extended a further year and expires March 23.

The Clerk asked members if they wished to continue the funding of costs. The Clerk stated that she was looking at viability of the council's current Markets Policy and has contacted Shropshire Council for further help and advice but, it needed further investigation, it was proposed that a working group to be setup to look into this and it was agreed to keep the current Tuesday Market Budget.

It was moved by Cllr G Hutchinson, seconded by Cllr A Wignall and

RESOLVED- to setup a working group to look at the SLA in more detail once the Clerk has received sufficient advice.

The meeting closed at 9:08pm

Chair:

Date: