



NEWPORT (Shropshire) TOWN COUNCIL

DRAFT UNTIL SIGNED AT SUBSEQUENT MEETING

**MINUTES OF A MEETING
RESOURCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE
held on
Wednesday 21 February 2018
at
The Guildhall, High Street, Newport**

PRESENT: Cllrs: Phil Norton (Chairman)
Lyn Fowler
Tim Nelson
Ian Perry
Tim Pryce

IN ATTENDANCE: Lee Jakeman - Town Clerk

**R&F/
40/17-18** **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
Nil

**R&F/
41/17-18** **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Pryce declared an interest in the item headed No 3A High Street as he is the sitting tenant.

**R&F/
42/17-18** **MINUTES**

Members **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th November 2017 be accepted and signed as a true record.

**R&F/
43/17-18** **PUBLIC SESSION**

There being no members of the public present the meeting continued.

TOWN COUNCIL FINANCES

**R&F/
44/17-18** **Income & Expenditure Report** - Members considered the latest copy of the Income & Expenditure Report (for non-committee budget lines) and made the following comments.

- a. A number of nominal ledgers had (knowingly) exceeded their individual budget lines or were predicted to do so (e.g.4071 – Election expenses. 4097 Neighbourhood Development Plan). However, it was felt that there were sufficient underspends in other nominal ledge lines within the same cost centres that would offset any overspend/underestimate of the budget.

- i. Nominal ledger 1002 (Income –Leases/Rents) was overstated and the corresponding expenditure nominal ledger 4151 (No3/3A Utilities) understated due to changes in the rental agreement confirmed in April 2017 (rent reduced in lieu of tenant picking up utility costs).
- ii. That the small anomalies in the budget served a useful purpose in identifying key decisions of the Council.
- iii. That it would be prudent for the Council to include (in future budgets) individual budget lines for those regular Town events (Carnival, Newport in Bloom, St Georges Day and Old Tyme Market) as opposed to a collective ‘Grants Budget’

b. Members **RESOLVED not to recommend any amendments to any individual nominal ledgers.**

**R&F/
45/17-18**

c. **5 Year Budget Estimates** – Members considered the latest copy of the 5 year budget estimates and made the following comments:

- i. Nominal Ledger 4200 – Overstated in years 2-5 as it does not take into account the anticipated savings with regard to the LED upgrade programme for street lights.
- ii. Members noted the healthy balance sheet and were of the view that a further significant amount should be invested long-term (most likely with the CCLA). However, members were mindful of the need for an appropriate liquidity in the Council’s with the increasing likelihood of services being devolved from the local authority. The Clerk was asked to obtain some independent financial/audit advice regarding an appropriate level of risk managed investment.
- iii. The long-term funding of the Cemetery grounds maintenance should not require be funded by in-year cemetery fees (one day the current cemetery will close however, the grass will need to be cut, trees and hedgerows maintained forever). A significant element of the exclusive rights of burial fees should be invested long-term and the ground maintenance be financed mostly by the return on such an investment. (Note in the current financial year to date the Council has received £14,286 in Exclusive Rights of Burial Fees).
- iv. Members considered the likely levels of taxation (increases) in future years based upon the Newport Town Council’s current financial outlook.

**R&F/
4617-18**

Members **RESOLVED:**

a: To recommend to the Full Town Council that a further £100,000 be invested in the CCLA Property Fund, (the Council currently has £50,000 invested with returns last year of circa 4%).

**R&F/
47/17-18**

Members **RESOLVED:**

To recommend the Full Town Council that it adopts the following general strategy in relation to setting future levels of the precept:

That there will inevitably be the need for annual increases in the level of taxation however, the Town Council (whilst not bound by them) should look to cap increases in line with those imposed by central government on local authorities and with regard to the annual rate of inflation.

INTERNAL AUDIT

**R&F/
48/17-18**

Members noted receipt of an interim internal audit and draft responses prepared by the Clerk. Members **RESOLVED:**

That the Clerk provide responses based around the comments of the members at the meeting.

Members noted that an external resource had been procured to undertake a calculation of VAT exempt expenditure on Tuesday 27th February 2018.

STANDING ORDERS

**R&F/
49/17-18**

Members noted a brief from the Deputy Town Clerk advising that:

- a. Standing orders would need to be amended (in relation to tender thresholds) in order that it matched the requirement (£25,000) in financial regulations.
- b. With the implementation of General Data Protection Regulation that there would shortly need to be an amendment to corresponding Data Protection paragraph.

Members **RESOLVED that:**

A satisfactory review of Standing Orders had taken place.

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS/ INTERNAL AUDIT

**R&F/
50/17-18**

Members noted a brief from the Deputy Town Clerk regarding a review of financial regulations which includes, at appendix 2, the Internal Audit Plan. Members **RESOLVED:**

- a. **That a satisfactory review of Financial Regulations (with no amendments being required) had been undertaken.**
- b. **That a satisfactory review of the Internal Audit Plan (with no amendments being required) had been undertaken.**

DATA PROTECTION POLICY

**R&F/
51/17-18** Members considered a report regarding the Council's strategy and actions to be compliant with the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation which comes into force in May 2018.

Members **RESOLVED:**

To discuss staffing elements of GDPR within the confidential session at the end of the meeting.

RISK MANAGEMENT REVIEW

**R&F/
52/17-18** Members considered the updated risk management schedule and were content that it identified reasonable risks that the Council faced and provided reasonable evidence of mitigation.

Members **RESOLVED:**

That a satisfactory review of the risk management schedule had been undertaken.

No 3A HIGH STREET

**R&F/
53/17-18** *(Note: Cllr Pryce Left the room having declared an interest in the agenda item)*

Members noted correspondence from the tenant. Members noted the terms and conditions of the lease and the ability to raise service charges for some modifications and repairs. In relation to the request members were minded to include the modifications as part of a wider large-scale maintenance programme of the Guildhall. However, before committing expenditure members asked that for more detail including:

- An appraisal of the necessity and immediacy of the requests (hand rail and door alterations).
- Estimated costs of undertaking the rectification work.
- Whether there were some economies of scale to be gained by including the works as larger piece of overall maintenance.

(Note: Cllr Pryce returned to the meeting at the end of the discussion)

**R&F/
54/17-18** **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Members **RESOLVED:**

That in view of the special nature of the business about to be conducted, (that is, staffing matters) it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

CONFIDENTIAL SESSION

(Note: elements of the discussion and any contractual details are confidential however the nature of decisions made are for public record.)

R&F/ 55/16-17 STAFF UPDATE

Members considered a brief from the Clerk and **RESOLVED:**

- a. (Having successfully completed the Certificate in Local Council Administration), **that the salary of The Deputy Clerk be increased by one Spinal Column point to SCP 32 (WEF 6th February 2018).**
- b. (With regard to GDPR), **that the preferred option is for the appointment of the Data Protection Officer be undertaken internally, with the Clerk to identify the suitable post and modify the relevant job description accordingly.**
- c. **That the probation period for the newly appointed administrative assistant be recorded as having been completed satisfactorily and that the salary be set at Spinal Column Point 11, WEF 1 April 2018.**
- d. **That the staff remuneration for attending weddings and interments out of normal hours be set as recommended** (fixed fee regardless of which individual performs the duty).
- e. **That any staff on the national minimum wage have their hourly rate increased in line with the appropriate legislation WEF 1 Apr 2018** (i.e. from £7.50 to 7.83 per hour).