

Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Friday 13 October 2017 at 10:00am in the Council Chamber of Beccles Town Hall

PRESENT: N Brooks, Chair
R Kathuria, Deputy Chair
J Harris
R Stubbings (Mayor)
J Walmsley

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs C Boyne, Town Clerk

MEMBERS OF PUBLIC: 0

1. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Councillors Brambley-Crawshaw, G Elliott and Kenward.

2. TO ELECT A CHAIR FOR 2017/18

It was proposed by Councillor Walmsley that Councillor Brooks becomes Chair. This was seconded by Councillor Harris, a vote was taken and it was therefore

RESOLVED That Councillor Brooks is elected the chair of the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for 2017/18

3. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OR ANY REQUESTS FOR THE GRANTING OF DISPENSATIONS IN RELATION TO ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were none.

4. TO ACCEPT FOR ACCURACY AND ADOPTION THE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2017

RESOLVED To accept for accuracy and adoption the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday 13 September 2017

5. TO REVIEW THE CURRENT S106 AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY SCHEDULES (CIL)

It was noted that all S106 and CIL contributions had now been allocated, but that further CIL funds were likely to be received in the very near future.

6. TO RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION THE FIRST DRAFT OF THE BUDGET FOR 2018/19 TO 2020/21

The clerk explained that she had reviewed the budgets and highlighted any

amendments she had made based on the information she was aware of and previous years' expenditure.

Insurance (1) – This had been increased by 3% for property valuation uplift and by £1,025 in respect of insurance for the Blyburgate Hall.

Remembrance Sunday (38) – The clerk had recommended an increase of £200 in order to allow for a reception to be held after the Remembrance Sunday Service.

Utility Vehicle (new) – It was agreed that a budget of £8,000 for initial purchase of a vehicle should be included in the budget. It was noted that the current Mr Tidy had expressed a preference for using his own van. The committee suggested that there was no need to make this purchase whilst Mr Tidy was happy using his own vehicle, but that it was important for this to be included in the budget in case this situation changed in the future. It was agreed that the Town Cleaner (285) budget should be increased by £200 to reflect the payments being made to Mr Tidy for his mileage and business insurance.

Blyburgate Hall (288) – The income budget of £22,500 was based on previous year hall hire income figures that had been provided by St John Ambulance and the rental from the cottage of £6,600 per annum. The income from the car park was not being taken into account at this time as it was not known how long the spaces would be available. It was difficult to estimate expenditure as this would vary year on year. A budget for expenditure of £10,000 had been set for the time being until more was known.

Trees (261) – The clerk had increased the tree budget from £150 to £500 as the council had the responsibility for the trees at Black Boy Pond. It was noted that Waveney Meadow had a lot of trees but that there was a separate budget for Waveney Meadow of £2,000.

CCTV Contribution to Reserve (279) – It was agreed that £5,000 should be removed as the cost of new CCTV cameras was much lower than initially anticipated and the reserve was showing a healthy balance.

Bell Tower (286) – The clerk reported that she had reduced expenditure by £2,000 to £1,000 and increased income to £3,500 based on the income received in the previous year. It was noted that the tower had not yet been registered for business rates, but she was hopeful that it would be recognised as part of the church and so would not be charged business rates.

Late Night Event (197) – There was discussion regarding Christmas Tree purchases and it was suggested that, given the increase in the cost the installation of the Christmas Lights, the number of Christmas Trees purchased should be reduced. The trees were not lit and did not add very much to the decoration of the town during the festive period. The Christmas Tree Festival ensured that there were a lot of decorated trees around the town.

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

To consider reducing the number of Christmas Trees purchased from 2018/19 in order to part fund the increased cost of the installation of the Christmas lights

There was discussion as to whether the Administration Recharge from the Fenland Trust (283) should be increased due to more staff time needing to be spent on Beccles Quay once this was transferred to the trust. This would be reviewed again at the next meeting, although it would be difficult to gauge at this time exactly what impact the Quay would have on staff time.

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

To review the first draft of the budget for 2018/19 to 2020/21 and consider any further changes to the budgets

There was general discussion regarding the Finance and General Purposes Committee role and it was clear from the Terms of Reference that the committee did have the remit of considering requests for expenditure for non-budgeted items and making recommendations to council. It would be helpful to the committee if suggestions regarding possible savings could be made along with any requests from other committees to spend unbudgeted funds.

7. TO RECEIVE THE CONSULTATION IN RESPECT OF PRECEPT REFERENDUMS

It was noted that once again the Government may introduce referendums for councils that do not demonstrate restraint when setting their precepts. A significant precept rise would only be considered acceptable if the council had taken on additional responsibilities. It was agreed not to respond to the consultation as the Suffolk Association of Local Councils would be responding on behalf of all Suffolk councils.

RESOLVED To receive for information the consultation in respect of precept referendums

8. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON COUNCIL LEASES

Former Waste Site - The clerk reported that she had received a further expression of interest regarding this site. It was agreed that the current interested party should be notified of this interest.

9. TO CONFIRM THE DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 15 November 2017 at 10:30am.

ABrooks 15/11/2017