

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee of Sandy Town Council which was held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 9 January 2017 commencing at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllrs P N Aldis, P Blaine, M Hill, W Jackson, M Pettitt, M Scott (Chairman), D Sharman and P Sharman.

In attendance: Cllrs S Sutton, T Knagg and Mr C Robson (Town Clerk)

Actions

1 Apologies for absence (81-2016/17)

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs T Cole, C Osborne and CBC Cllr Stock.

2 Declarations of interest (82-2016/17)

- i) Declarable pecuniary interests – None
- ii) Non pecuniary interests – None

3 Public Participation Session (83-2016/17)

There were no questions received from members of the public.

4 Minutes of previous meeting (84-2016/17)

RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on 21 November 2016 and to approve them as a correct record of proceedings.

5 Financial Reports (85-2016/17)

- i) A balance sheet and detailed financial report showing income and expenditure against the revenue budget for the year to 31st October 2016 had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

Members scrutinised the financial report.

RESOLVED to note the report.

- ii) A balance sheet and detailed financial report showing income and expenditure against the revenue budget for the year to 30th November 2016 had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

Members scrutinised the financial report.

The Clerk explained that the Service Contracts Budget line was over

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spent due to the renewal of the Roman Sandy website domain. This is renewed every two years and had not been budgeted for in previous years. The 2017/18 budget has been increased to reflect this. Members asked about the value the site was providing. The Clerk confirmed that at present it offered limited value and was not widely advertised or utilised. Members agreed that the website needed a review to ensure it was up to date and offered the best possible value for the costs involved.

Agreed that the Clerk bring a review to committee on the Roman Sandy Website when appropriate.

Town Clerk

Photocopier costs are slightly overspent. The agreement for the photocopier will be renewed in May 2017 and the Council will go out for tender. Based on discussions with providers to date it is anticipated that a saving will be made in a new contract.

403 4014 is currently being investigated as the electricity costs seem high. In previous years a credit has been received following review of reading submitted.

It was commented that more income and expenditure will hit cost center 509 in the December and January accounts as invoices were still being settled for the Christmas Light Switch on Event.

The Clerk informed Members that expenditure for 602 4200 should be £350 lower and that this will be reflected in the December accounts. This is because a £350 cost related to a Mayors Charity event should be taken from the Mayors Charity account, not the Mayors allowance.

iii) Members received and reviewed a budget overview report.

It was noted that some invoices from Central Bedfordshire Council, namely for CCTV and Grass Cutting, would not come in until March 2017. Therefore expenditure appears low at present.

A Member asked whether the fencing work at the Riddy was now complete. The Clerk confirmed that it was but that Wildlife Trust had not yet issued STC with an invoice. The Clerk is currently chasing the invoice along with the invoice for The Riddy and The Pinnacle 2016/17 Management fee.

RESOLVED to note the report.

iv) Members scrutinised a schedule of payments made since the

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previous meeting.

A Member asked about the rates paid to CBC for 'Market' rates. The Clerk informed the Committee that these rates were also for the car park, as the two were combined. A review of the rates payable has been requested now that the market no longer trades.

RESOLVED to approve the schedule of payments.

v) Bank reconciliations and statements.

RESOLVED that Cllr Scott scrutinise the bank reconciliations and statements and sign these as approved at the end of the meeting.

6 Action List (86-2016/17)

The Town Clerk presented the Action List which identifies actions from previous meetings and their status.

The Clerk informed Members that the next service contract due to be reviewed is the photocopier/scanner/printer. Tenders would be brought to committee so a new contract can be implemented from May 2017.

The Clerk informed Members that he was due to meet with CBC's Service Contract Manager at the beginning of February to discuss the Jenkins Pavilion Contract and service provided by SLL. The Clerk would bring Members concerns to the officer's attention. The Clerk had received an email from the CBC legal officer looking at the Jenkins contract stating more information and feedback on the contract would be forthcoming the week of 19th January 2017.

Town Clerk

7 Events Budget (87-2016/17)

Cllr. Aldis declared a pecuniary interest as Vice Chairman of the Horticultural Association, which has received grants to run an event in the past from the Council.

Members received a report from the Town Clerk on the previously proposed and agreed events budget for the 2017/18 financial year. The Clerk reminded Members that the budget had been suggested due to Councillors concerns that regular grant requests from long running community events used up a significant amount of the grants budget. The Clerk informed Members that as the Council wishes to run specialised markets, up to £500 of the proposed £2,000 events budget should be allocated for Council events.

Members discussed the proposed budget and commented as follows;

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A Member commented that the £2,000 put forward was fairly modest and that it could be increased to help support community events and cohesion. It was also commented that the proposed cap of £500 was too prescriptive.

A Member commented that the budget needs to be kept as straight forward as possible. The Council should support the town's two regular annual events which provide a benefit to the whole community via specified expenditure to support the event rather than a grant. For example the Council could agree to pay the insurance costs for the event each year and/or the venue fees. This would be the Council's contribution and no further grants applications would come forward from the event organisers.

A Member stated that he feared the proposed events budget may create some confusion due to the difficulty in defining what is an event and would be eligible for financial support. The split between the grants budget and the events budget may result in some organisations failing to fit into either category.

A Member stated that the events budget should just target the regular large Sandy events for which the Council has received regular requests.

It was suggested it may be more appropriate to increase the overall grants fund and deal with each application on its merit.

A Member commented that putting aside distinctions on what is an event and what isn't, there were various large reoccurring grant applications which should be understood and budgeted for. Anything else should then come from the grants pot. However, the proposed budget should run and the results be reviewed.

It was Proposed and Seconded that the proposed events budget be run for two years with a complete review of applications and expenditure following this period.

The Chair suggested that the committee review the budget in 6 months' time.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Council budgets £2,000 for the Events Budget in 2017/18 and that the budget line run for two years before been fully reviewed and reassessed.

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8 2017/18 Draft Budget (88 -2016/17)

Members received a report and budget papers from the Town Clerk. The report outlined the changes the Clerk had made to the budget since the last review by the committee on 21 November 2017. These had been as a result of the previous review by the committee.

The Clerk informed Members that an additional cost to those detailed will be incurred by the Council, as the Council's computer server was failing and due to its age, is no longer supported. The Clerk informed Members there would be an estimated cost of £5,000. Members agreed that the matter was urgent and should be dealt with under the current financial year. The Chair asked that the Clerk bring the matter to the next Full Town Council meeting.

The Clerk informed Members that an increase to the street lighting budget was proposed due to an anticipated over spend in the current financial year for repair costs. The Clerk is currently investigating the costs of installing LED lights as and when a streetlight reaches the point it needs replacing. A Member asked that the Clerk confirms that should the Town Council install LED lights that the savings made on electricity costs would be passed on to the Town Council by CBC.

The report from the Clerk informed Members that the increase in budget codes to ensure costs were reasonably budgeted for resulted in a reduction in the amount to be budgeted for the Rolling Capital Fund Allocation. If Members wished to keep the Fund at the same level as previously proposed a precept increase of 5% would be required.

A Member stated that the Town Council should not exceed the 4.75% increase proposed by CBC for their Council Tax. While the Town Council does have projects that need funding, an increase of 5% cannot be justified.

Some Members shared the view that an increase would need to be clearly justified and that while 3.72% could be, due to increasing budget costs and ongoing projects, 5% could not be. The Precept should be kept to a minimum.

An offer from the Chair to review the budget papers to see if any savings could be made was rejected by Members.

It was Proposed and Seconded that the 2017/18 budget as proposed, is agreed and taken to Full Council for approval with a Precept increase of 3.72% for the next financial year.

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The Chair expressed some concern that only 4 Members voted for the following recommendation.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the 2017/18 budget as proposed is agreed and taken to Full Council for approval with a Precept increase of 3.72% (£4.88 per year) for the next financial year.

9 Cricket Green Mower (89 -2016/17)

Cllr Pettitt declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Vice President of the Cricket Club.

Members received a report from the Town Clerk and discussed the purchase of a new mower used by the Cricket Club. The Clerk informed the committee that the mower is a Town Council asset and that due to its age it is in need of significant repairs (£750 - £1,000). While the budget is available to carry out the repairs it would be more economical to consider the purchase of a replacement mower, with the current being sold, to reduce future years maintenance costs on ongoing repairs.

Members discussed the mower and commented that considering the age of the mower (originally purchased in the 1980's) it had provided a good service. It was noted that this would be down to the knowledge of the groundsman, who held significant training and knowledge which undoubtedly ensured careful use, maintenance and movement of the mower, most likely extending its lifespan considerably. Members were concerned that if there are change overs with individuals using the mower and carrying out maintenance of the pitch, a lack of knowledge and training may shorten the lifespan of the new mower.

A Member commented that it is likely that training to use the mower will be provided by the supplier.

A Member commented that the mower is at risk of damage during its movement to and from the cricket field, whereby it goes over three types of terrain, including tarmac and uneven concrete slabs. Concern was expressed that this could cause damage to the new mower and blades if not moved with due care and attention, creating more maintenance costs and reducing the lifespan. It was suggested that the possibility of a trolley be investigated for the purpose of moving the mower without causing repeated damage.

It was Proposed that the purchase of the mower be approved but that the Council finds out how it can be ensured that it will be correctly looked after with appropriate training for users. It was

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noted that it was mutually beneficial for STC and SCC to get the best out of it.

RESOLVED to approve the purchase of a new mower from underspend in cost center 501, but that clarification be sought on the proper training to protect and use the mower to ensure its longevity.

Town Clerk

10 Computer Resources (90 -2016/17)

The Committee received a report from the Town Clerk on the need for a replacement laptop. As the cost of the laptop and associated programs exceeded the £500 limit for Clerk's designated expenditure (where a budget is in place) authorisation for the purchase was required. The laptop, programs and work to sync it to the STC network and server would be provided by the Council's contracted IT provider.

It was **RESOLVED** that the specified laptop be purchased from the IT Costs budget line which is currently underspent by 63%.

Admin

11 Council Risk Assessment (91-2016/17)

Members received a Risk Management Strategy and Risk Assessment from the Town Clerk.

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the Strategy and Assessment, stating that it covered the main risks the Council faced and how they were mitigated. The Clerk had discussed and taken advice on the strategy and assessment from Clerks of other similar sized Councils.

RESOLVED to adopt the Risk Management Strategy and Risk Assessment.

Admin

12 Chairman's Items (92 -2016/17)

The were no Chairman's items.

13 Date of Next Meeting – 13 February 2017 (93 -2016/17)