

CHIPPENHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held at the Town Hall, High Street, Chippenham on Wednesday 13th December 2017 at 7pm

COUNCILLORS: Desna Allen
Peter Hutton
Ashley O'Neill
Andy Phillips
John Scragg
Jenny Budgell
Teresa Hutton (to item 73)
Nick Murry
Chris Ruck
Sandie Webb (Chairman)

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mark Smith (Chief Executive)
Adrian Jones (Deputy Chief Executive)
Charlotte Starkie (Head of Finance and Administration)
Lynsey Nichols (Marketing and Communications Officer)

PUBLIC PRESENT: One member of the public.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A member of the public spoke to the meeting and accepted that the BID was not accountable to the Town Council, but requested that councillors pay attention to the running costs and overheads of the BID, as well as having an interest in the events provided by the BID, under the Service Level Agreement with the Town Council.

57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mary Norton and Michelle Pearce.

58. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

59. MINUTES

Councillors approved as a true record the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25th October 2017 and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED that:

The minutes are approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

60. SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES

a. Community Donations Sub Committee

Councillors noted the draft minutes from the Community Donations Sub Committee dated 19th October 2017. All matters had been resolved.

b. Civic Matters Sub Committee

Councillors noted the draft minutes from the Civic Matters Sub Committee dated 1st November 2017. All matters had been resolved.

c. Personnel Sub Committee

Councillors noted the draft minutes from the Personnel Sub Committee dated 9th November 2017. All matters had been resolved.

61. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- a. The Chairman wished everyone a very Merry Christmas.
- b. Reference was made to a written statement submitted in advance by a member of the public, regarding the Bath Road toilet report. It was agreed to refer to this, as necessary, and at the relevant point in the meeting agenda.

62. **WORKING PARTY NOTES AND FEEDBACK**

Finance Working Party

Councillors noted the draft notes from the Finance Working Party meeting dated 20th November 2017. The recommendation from that meeting on the budget and precept will be considered during this meeting.

63. **AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS FOR OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2017**

Councillors noted the report presented by the Head of Finance and Administration on the Cheque and BACS audit for months seven and eight 2017.

RESOLVED that:

The report be noted.

64. **RENEWAL OF THE GAS CONTRACT**

Councillors received a report from the Head of Finance and Administration on the renewal of the Council's gas contract for the Neeld and Town Hall. Quotes had been received from 3 companies and a request was made to approach a sustainable gas company for a comparative quote. Councillors agreed that this matter be delegated to the Head of Finance and Administration to pursue as part of the delegated scheme of work and that the matter would not need to be returned to committee for approval.

RESOLVED that:

Responsibility be delegated to the Head of Finance and Administration to enter into a new gas contract, having approached a sustainable gas company for a comparative quote, and that this matter be permanently delegated to the Head of Finance and Administration with no need to bring the matter to a future committee.

65. **DELEGATION OF FINANCIAL SPENDING LIMITS TO OFFICERS**

Councillors received a report from the Head of Finance and Administration on proposed amendments to the list of authorised Officers who hold spending limits. Councillors agreed with the recommendations in the report and that the following be added to the list of authorised Officers with spending limits (report in minute book).

- Corporate Support Manager (new role) £5,000
- Corporate Support Officer (revised role) £1,000
- Marketing and Box Office Coordinator (new role) £1,000
- Box Officer Supervisor (revised role) £1,000
- Duty Officer (revised role) £500

RESOLVED that:

The above officers be added to the Council's list of authorised Officers with spending limits.

66. DRAFT FEES AND CHARGES 2018/19

Councillors received a report from the Head of Finance and Administration, containing the recommendations from the Amenities, Culture and Leisure Committee, on the draft fees and charges that should be introduced for 2018/19 (copy in minute book).

Councillor Peter Hutton requested that community groups be given assistance with the cost of room hire and it was proposed that whilst the figures be accepted, that the Chief Executive to have delegated responsibility to consider requests from community groups for subsidised or free room hire.

RESOLVED that:

Councillors adopt the draft fees and charges for 2018/19 and that the Chief Executive be delegated authority to consider requests from community groups for subsidised or free rooms.

67. BUDGET AND PRECEPT FOR 2018/19

- a. Members received an update from Councillor Andy Phillips, Chairman of the Finance Working Party, on the recommendations for the budget and precept for 2018/19 from the Finance Working Party (copy in minute book). He stated that the working party had considered the budget proposal and that all lines of expenditure, including new activities and projects, had been agreed by the various committees.

In its consideration of what the precept for 2018/19 should be, the Finance Working Party had agreed that it should not exceed a 5% increase. However the Finance Working Party were making 2 proposals to the committee to consider, that of a 3% increase and a 5% increase on the precept, as the Council needed to ensure that it retained adequate amounts in its General Reserves. Councillors needed to be mindful of the future transfer of assets and services to the Council which would lead to an increase in expenditure. Councillors also needed to be aware that the possibility of a cap on the precept beyond a 2% increase still existed.

- b. The proposals made by the Finance Working Party were:

A draft operational expenditure budget of	£2,813,309
Proposed income budget of	£ 605,733
Net balance of expenditure	£2,207,576

To be funded either by:

- i. **3% increase** on the precept
- Precept of **£2,106,118**
 - **£101,458** be removed from General Reserves to fund the shortfall
 - An increase from **£169.13 per annum to £174.20** (an increase of £5.07 per year, or 43p per month) (Band D household Council tax payers).

Or:

- ii. **5% increase on the precept**
- Precept of **£2,147,062**
 - **£60,514** being taken from General Reserves to fund the shortfall
 - An increase from **£169.13 per annum to £177.59** (an increase of £8.46 per year, or 71p per month) (Band D household Council tax payers).

c. Councillors discussed the proposals and highlighted the following: that a consistent increase was more palatable than irregular increases, that a 3% increase on the precept aligned the Council with the Police and Fire Service increases, but that a lower increase now might result in the Council applying a higher increase in the future. Further work would be done to establish a policy for the holding of General Reserves and Earmarked Funds. A further report shall be brought back to the Strategy and Resources Committee for consideration in due course.

d. Councillor Sandie Webb suggested that the amount that was proposed to be put into Earmarked Funds be reduced from £72,500 to £32,500 and that the Head of Finance and Administration make the adjustment to the budget proposal. This would not impact on the precept but would reduce the operational budget for the year. Members agreed with this amendment to the budget.

e. Councillor Desna Allen proposed that the precept be increased by 5% to **£2,147,062**. This motion was seconded by Councillor John Scragg.

f. Councillor Sandie Webb proposed that the precept be increased by 3% to **£2,106,118**. This motion was seconded by Councillor Ashley O'Neill.

g. Put to the vote, 5 councillors voted in favour of the 3% increase and 5 councillors voted against a 3% increase. Using the casting vote, the Chairman voted in favour of a 3% increase to the precept.

RESOLVED that:

h. The Strategy and Resources Committee recommend to the Full Council meeting on 17th January 2018 that the precept for 2018/19 shall be £2,106,118 and an increase of 3% (an increase from £169.13 per Band D household to £174.20 per Band D household) and that the draft budget be amended to reduce the amount that is used to replenish Earmarked Funds from £72,500 to £32,500.

68. UPDATE ON THE OPERATION OF THE BATH ROAD TOILET

Councillors received a report from the Deputy Chief Executive, on the Bath Road toilet facility (copy in minute book). He highlighted the recent drug problems and suggested ways to improve the facility and eradicate the problem.

Councillors discussed the option to remain open versus to close, in detail and agreed that other ways to keep the facility open should be explored: installing a needle collection scheme, reducing the opening hours, installing a “pay to use” meter, infrared “blue lights”, police checks, working more closely with drug agencies and other partners, installing CCTV, finding an alternative toilet facility within the Neeld Community and Arts Centre as part of the longer term plan.

Councillors discussed the merits of keeping the facility open and agreed that further investigation must be undertaken with a report to this committee in a further 6 months, and that in the meantime the Deputy Chief Executive to do all he can to improve the situation and to keep the toilets open. Seven Councillors voted in favour of the toilets staying open, 2 Councillors voted against the toilets staying open and 1 Councillor abstained from the vote.

RESOLVED that:

- a. The Bath Road toilet facility remain open.
- b. Authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive to bring in the measures discussed to alleviate the problems being encountered and improve the facility.
- c. Authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive to bring in measures to alleviate the drug problem and improve the facility. An update report shall be brought back to the Strategy and Resources Committee in either June or September 2018.

69. VISUAL IDENTITY AND COUNCIL BRANDING

Councillors received a report from the Marketing and Communications Officer on the future branding of the Council (copy in the minute book). The report was considered with Councillors asking for the rationale behind the rebranding exercise, whether the budget covered the cost of new signage and whether it was the best use of Council funds at a time when organisations were needing to be prudent.

Councillors agreed that it was necessary to present a united Council with the different service areas and to bring the Neeld Community and Arts Centre into the current brand, as well as redeveloping the website, and asked if local support could be provided after a consultation with the Councillors. Purple Flag needed to be tied into the brand as did other awards that the Council was in receipt of and it was necessary to have a uniformed approach to branding and communication. After a further discussion on finances, it was agreed that the report should be presented at a future meeting, covering more detail and with a firm proposal for Councillors to consider.

RESOLVED that:

The report be represented at the next meeting, giving more detail and a proposal for Councillors to consider.

70. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

No matters were submitted for consideration at a future meeting.

71. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 21 February 2018.

72. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Councillors agreed to the following resolution:

“The press and public are excluded from the remained of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings Act) 1960 s1. Sub section 2.

73. CHIPPENHAM BID

Councillors received a confidential report from the Chief Executive on the events programme and the BID’s partnership with the Town Council. After discussions that covered a wide range of matters it was agreed that:

- a. The existing Service Level Agreement between Chippenham Town Council and the Chippenham Business Improvement District be subject to a refresh.
- b. The Chief Executive remind the BID that it must not use any of the £40,000 contribution that the Town Council makes specifically for events to fund events organised by other organisations/charities where those organisations have, or may, approach the Town Council for financial support.
- c. The £5,000 the BID have placed in an “unallocated events budget” be either committed to a specific event or returned to the Town Council.
- d. The BID be asked to do more to investigate sponsorship opportunities for events to supplement that contribution that the Town Council makes.
- e. The BID provide a detailed activity and cost report after each event where funding under the SLA is used.

RESOLVED that:

- a. The Chief Executive be given delegated authority to request a mid-term refresh of the SLA to ensure it is better aligned to the Town Council’s required outcomes.
- b. The SLA be strengthened to make it clear that the BID is not to utilise any of the money transferred to the BID in the SLA to fund other organisations that are able to apply to the Town Council directly for funds to support events.
- c. The £5,000 currently held by the BID in an “unallocated events budget” be either committed to an event or returned to the Town Council.
- d. The BID be asked to investigate further any sponsorship opportunities for future events.
- e. The BID be requested to provide a breakdown of cost and activity for each event that utilises the Town Council’s financial contribution under the SLA.

74. PRESS RELEASE

There were no specific request for a press release.

Councillor Peter Hutton wished all the staff a very Merry Christmas.

The meeting concluded at 8.40pm.

These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting. Signed on behalf of the committee as a true record of the meeting.

Signed:

Date:

DRAFT