



Minutes of a meeting of the Extraordinary Strategy and Resources Committee held virtually on Zoom on 15 July 2020 at 7pm.

**Councillors present:**

James Adman	Desna Allen
Pete Bishop	Jenny Budgell (Vice)
Clare Cape	Peter Hutton
Teresa Hutton	Mary Norton
Ashley O'Neill	Andy Phillips
John Scragg	Sandie Webb (Chairman)

**Officers present:** Mark Smith, Chief Executive  
Nick Rees, Director of Resources  
Barry Pirie, Director of Community Services  
Daryl Jones, Business Support Manager  
Gillian Ballinger, Finance Manager  
Heather Rae, Democratic Services Manager  
Ann Chard, Administrative Services Officer - Planning  
Michael Weeks, Democratic and Civic Officer

**Also present:** Councillor Nick Murry

**Public present:** There were two members of the public present.

**PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There was one verbal question from a member of the public which is appended to these minutes at **APPENDIX A**. The response to this question was not part of the meeting but is appended to these minutes at **APPENDIX B**.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**2. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTION**

There were no notifications of substitutions.

**3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4. MINUTES**

It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2020 were a correct record and

#### **RESOLVED that:**

The minutes were approved as a correct record and will be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

#### **5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman congratulated the Mayor, Councillor Teresa Hutton for chairing the extraordinary Full Council meeting at 4pm and Cllr Peter Hutton for the amendment which was put forward and agreed by Council.

#### **6. SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES**

##### **i) COMMUNITY DONATIONS SUB COMMITTEE**

Councillor Sandie Webb presented the minutes. Councillors noted the minutes from the Community Donations Sub Committee meeting dated 13 February 2020 and the recommendations therein and all matters were resolved.

#### **7. ADVISORY GROUP NOTES**

##### **i) CLIMATE EMERGENCY ADVISORY GROUP (CEAG) NOTES**

Councillor Desna Allen presented the notes. Councillors noted the Climate Emergency Advisory Group notes from the meeting held on 16 March 2020 and the recommendations therein and all matters were resolved.

#### **8. YEAR END ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR 2019/20**

The Director of Resources presented the report containing the year end accounts and financial statements for 2019/20. The Director of Resources highlighted that Committee are asked to consider and confirm the assertions in section one of the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 and to consider and confirm all financial figures contained within Section Two Accounting Statements 2019/20 and to make a recommendation to Full Council that they be approved as part of the annual return for 2019/20.

To receive the Annual Unaudited Financial Statements as prepared by the council's external accountant and make a recommendation to Full Council that they be adopted by Chippenham Town Council.

Councillors Peter Hutton questioned whether there was any guidance for the Council to have an amount less than 25% of precept in general reserves rather than increasing the precept. The Director of Resources confirmed that general reserves are currently at 25% of the previous year's precept, in line with the Council's agreed policy. If there is a deficit this year due to COVID-19, it would be possible

but would contradict the council's financial regulations. It was also noted that it is good to have reserves to deal with scenarios such as COVID-19.

Councillor Peter Hutton questioned whether Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money was being set aside for community projects, the Director of Resources confirmed that CIL money is specifically earmarked for CIL expenditure,

Councillor Jenny Budgell thanked the Director of Resources, Finance Manager and the team for all their work on last year and this year noting the difficulty of this unknown situation. It was highlighted that once the Finance Working Party is decided it should meet as soon as possible.

**RESOLVED that:**

Councillors noted the report and the year-end process and agreed to recommend to Full Council on 22 July 2020 that:

- i. The individual statements contained within the Annual Governance Statement 2019/2020 be confirmed;
- ii. The financial figures contained within the Accounting Statements 2019/2020 be confirmed;
- iii. The unaudited financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2020 be adopted by Chippenham Town Council.

**9. APPOINTMENT OF WORKING PARTIES FOR 2020/21**

The Chief Executive thanked Group Leaders for submitting Councillor names in advance of the meeting for appointment to the Finance, Standing Orders, Devolution and Neeld Development Working Parties for 2020/21.

With all in favour it was

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) The Chief Executive be authorised to determine the terms of reference, level of adequate support required and the date of the first meeting of the Finance, Standing Orders, Devolution and Neeld Development Working Parties 2020/21.
- ii) The following Councillors be appointed to the Finance, Standing Orders, Devolution and Neeld Development Working Parties of the Strategy and Resources Committee for 2020/21:

**Finance Working Party**

Richard Bambury	Pete Bishop	Jenny Budgell	Mary Norton
Andy Phillips	Chris Ruck	John Scragg	Sandie Webb

### Standing Orders Working Party

Desna Allen	Pete Bishop	Teresa Hutton	Nick Murry
Mary Norton	Andy Phillips	Chris Ruck	Sandie Webb

### Devolution Working Party

Desna Allen	Teresa Hutton	Nick Murry	Mary Norton
Andy Phillips	David Powell	Chris Ruck	John Scragg
Sandie Webb			

### The Neeld Development Working Party

Desna Allen	Jenny Budgell	Peter Hutton	Mary Norton
David Powell	Chris Ruck	Sandie Webb	

## 10. STRATEGY AND RESOURCES DECISIONS MADE UNDER DELEGATION

The Chief Executive presented the list of decisions made under delegated authority by the Chief Executive during the COVID-19 pandemic period from 17 March to 15 July 2020. It was noted that decision making through the Strategy and Resources Committee will now resume through virtual meetings.

### RESOLVED that:

The Strategy and Resources Decisions made under delegation during the period 17 March to 15 July 2020 be noted.

## 11. FINANCE UPDATE - COVID-19 REVISED BUDGET AND MAY YTD FINANCIAL RESULTS

The Director of Resources presented the report regarding the financial update, COVID-19 revised budget and May Year to Date financial results. A potential loss of income totalling £439,000 was noted, the Corporate Management Team (CMT) have looked at revised budget and expenditure budget to achieve a balance. It was noted that CMT have looked at figures for a full year impact, if the COVID-19 situation changes the internal budget will be revisited. It was highlighted that this is not permanent budget and original budgets will be returned to once COVID is over.

To avoid additional impact on precept payers, potential savings have been identified through vacant posts, deferred recruitment and a general reduction in expenditure budgets and non-critical expenditure such as marketing and consultancy. Maintenance has been kept at bare minimum and potential savings have been identified against running costs of putting shows on at the Neeld Community and Arts Centre. The revised budget assumed that the Neeld Community and Arts Centre remains closed for the COVID Period, however if a decision is made to re-open the Neeld Community and Arts Centre with social distancing guidelines in place and reduced capacity, income would be reduced but costs would be the same.

We have identified savings of £439,000 to achieve a balanced COVID-19 revised budget. It was highlighted that phasing the budget is difficult to do, the current

figures are encouraging but also flattering as there will be committed spend later in the year. It was noted that the result of the Council decision to re-open play areas wasn't budgeted and will have an effect on a break-even budget.

Councillor Peter Hutton questioned whether there was any government funding or grants available to the Neeld to keep theatres in business and whether this could be applied for. The Director of Resources noted that the regulations would be looked into to establish whether this applies to the public sector. Any funding available would need to cover 100% of costs to avoid operating with a reduction in income. The Chief Executive noted that further details could be circulated in a Councillor bulletin once obtained.

Councillor Clare Cape noted a potential reduction in costs by reducing grass cutting however it may be marginal and commended the grass cutting along Pewsham Way for preserving wild flower areas.

**RESOLVED that:**

Councillors noted the report and the process for controlling expenditure in order to mitigate the effect that Covid-19 has had and continues to have on Chippenham Town Council's finances, in relation to lost income and additional expenditure.

The Finance Manager left the meeting

**12. FINAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2020/21**

The Director of Resources presented the final internal audit report, explained the internal audit process and noted that the auditors confirm that the financial controls we have in place are sufficient.

**RESOLVED that:**

Councillors noted the report.

**13. ITEMS FOR COMMUNICATION**

Councillors did not request any specific items for communication.

**14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of this Committee will take place at 7pm on Wednesday 02 September 2020.

The meeting concluded at 7.45pm

These Minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting

Signed on behalf of the Committee as a true record of the meeting

Chairman:

Date:

### Public comments and questions

At the invitation of the Chairman a resident made the following statement:

A suggestion to save some money, I know we have mentioned many times before about leaving open green spaces and verges uncut. Recently I went spoken to speak to the Idverde contractors as they were scalping the green in Cepen Park North to ask them if they could leave a wild flower area. They told me that they were quite happy to do that and thought it was a really good idea however their manager would go and check on their work afterwards and complain that they hadn't done their job properly if they did leave a wild area. So I think we need to cut back on the amount of cutting of green spaces that we do, leave the wildlife to have peace and quiet which they've seen throughout lockdown and maintain that and improve it. Hopefully that could also save the Council some money.

A written response was sent to the resident following the meeting and this is also attached at **APPENDIX B** (not part of the meeting).

### **Not part of the meeting**

### **Appendix B**

Written response to public question asked at S&R Committee on 16 July 2020.

Thank you for your comments at S&R Committee on 16 July 2020 about reducing the cutting of green spaces and verges to not only reduce costs to the Council but to also encourage wildlife. Your comments have been noted.