



BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

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9th January 2023

Finance & Policy Committee Meeting

Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Berkhamsted

Monday 9th January 2023 at 7.30 pm.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors: R. Freedman (Chair)
G. Stevens (Vice Chair)
J. Jones
N. Taylor
A. Foster
P. De Hoest

ALSO

PRESENT: Cllr G. Corry
Councillors: S. Severn, Town Clerk (minutes), D. Beecroft, Finance Officer
Officers: None
Members of Public:

OPENING MATTERS AND GOVERNANCE

FP 01/23 To receive and approve Apologies for Absence
Cllr P White sent apologies for the meeting due to his being overseas on business.
The apologies were accepted and approved unanimously.

FP 02/23 Declarations of Interest

- i. To **receive** declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda;
- ii. To **receive** written requests for dispensations for declarable interests; and
- iii. To **grant** any requests for dispensation as appropriate.

No declarations of interest were made.

FP 03/23 To receive and approve Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 5th December 2022 (previously circulated).
The minutes were approved subject to a minor amendment to comments made by Cllr de Hoest under FP69/22 to remove 'and £30,000' from his suggested amendment to Coronation budget.

Public Participation

No members of the public were present.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

FP 04/23

Budget Preparation & Precept 2023/24

The revised budget proposals and precept demand for the financial year.

Councillors discussed the budget and reviewed the revised items of expenditure and income shown in the budget as circulated. The figures were arrived at during the budget workshop in December (subsequently amended to show a budgeted decrease).

The Chair stated that the decision required is the amount of precept required to cover agreed budget and to meet general reserve regulations. He asked councillors to consider whether they felt all expenditure to March 2024 was budgeted and to agree the recommendation to be made to full council. Cllr Cory asked that the name of our appointed accountant is shown in the minutes: The Clerk confirmed that Mr Derek Beavers of DCK Beavers was the accountant and that he would attend the full council meeting on Monday 16th January to answer any questions councillors might have.

Councillors examined the detailed budget and the following questions were asked:

- It was confirmed that the grants budget included major grants to the Swan Youth Project, Open Door, PCSO and general small grants, plus Coronation activities.
- Office maintenance - the Chair advised there were 3 separate items within this item:

1 is genuine office maintenance such as emergency repairs (repairs & maintenance fully delegated to the Clerk);

2 is expenditure to bring office to acceptable working standard following zero investment in many years. Councillors opinion will be sought but the Clerk will manage the work. Replacing furniture was included in this item.

3 is full improvement including things which we are legally obliged to do. Funds in the budget to cover overdue maintenance to ensure the working environment is acceptable. This will be paid from rolling capital fund, which will be topped up annually from budget.

Cllr Stevens stated that the rolling capital fund should be maintained at a 'healthy' level. The Chair advised that for the 2023/24 increases the Precept would be set to maintain council expenditure at current levels. The rolling capital fund allows surplus from previous years to be held for future years' projects allowing flexibility and ensuring general reserves are prudent.

The budget as circulated was agreed and it was **resolved** unanimously.

The 2023/24 Precept will increase to £450,000 resulting in a precept equivalent for a Band D property of £52.17, or £1.01 per week (39%).

It was agreed and **resolved** unanimously to recommend this amount to Full Council.

FP 05/23

Income and Expenditure including Receipts and Payments Schedule

- (i) To **note and approve** the Income and Expenditure and Variance Analysis at 31st October 2022.
- (ii) Payments and receipts schedules for the period 30th October 2022 –will be sent to the Chair of F&P for scrutiny.
- (iii) To **note** the balance sheet at 30th November 2022.
The above reports were received and approved. The interim internal audit report, received on 9th January had been circulated and was noted. The Chair congratulated the Finance Officer on successful completion of the interim internal audit.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.20pm.