

**HUNTINGDON TOWN COUNCIL****FINANCE WORKING PARTY**

A meeting of the Finance Working Party was held at 1 Trinity Place, Hartford Road, Huntingdon on Wednesday January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

Present: Councillors A Beevor; C Hyams; and J Skerry.

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED** to elect Councillor J Skerry as Chairman to the Finance Working Party for the current local government year.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Blackwell and W Hensley.

3. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

Since Members were of the view that this working party was not likely to meet again, it was

**RESOLVED** to recommend that a Vice Chairman not be appointed.

4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Beevor declared a personal interest in matters relating to the funding of the Huntingdon & Godmanchester Twinning Association and the Huntingdon Commemoration Hall Charity, as a member and Trustee of these respectively.

5. **ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE AND INCOME 2012-2013**

Members had before them a copy of the draft estimates of income and expenditure for the financial year 2012/13, put before Members of the Council's Finance Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> December. A report of the Town Clerk reminded those at the meeting of four items which had not been included in the draft and which required their consideration at this meeting. These were:

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| • A contribution for CCTV Provision in Huntingdon | £39,710 |
| • Capital expenditure for allotments              | £9,414  |
| • A noticeboard for Huntingdon West               | £1,800  |
| • Funding for repairs at the Olympic Gym Club     | £30,000 |

It was proposed and

**RESOLVED** to recommend that provision be allocated for these in the draft estimates.

Draft estimates proposed an application for precept in the amount of £805,848, equating to that of 2011/12. Consideration was given to the fact that the Council

had increased responsibility for service provision; the public conveniences at Hartford Road and CCTV provision being two examples and that therefore a moderate precept increase was justifiable. It was therefore proposed and

**RESOLVED** to recommend that the precept application should be increased by 2% from £805,848 to £821,965.

Members then gave detailed discussion and consideration to the remainder of the draft budget, seeking efficiencies where possible. The following were identified:

Heading	Comment	Amendment to draft estimates
General Administration - Advertising	No advertising requirement is foreseen for recruitment purposes	Reduce from £1800 to £900
Community Development - Community Development	Provision of £30,000 for the Olympic Torch event and Diamond Jubilee considered excessive	Reduce from £30,000 to £15,000
Community Development - Summer Band Concerts	£5000 is considered over-estimated	Reduce from £5000 to £4500
Community Development - Heritage Festival	A need for austerity puts in question provision for this event	To make no contribution to reserves this year and remove the proposed £15,000
Community Development - Artistic Programme	The programme should be self-funding	Reduce the provision from £3890 to £3000
Civic Account - Mayor's Purse	The allowance has been increased for inflation, when this is not considered necessary	Reduce the provision from £3980 to £3880
Newsletter and Annual Report	The proposed estimates allow for production of a 20-page magazine, when a 16-page magazine is more cost effective	Reduce the provision for newsletter printing to reflect production of a 16-page magazine (£16,598)
Newsletter and Annual Report	The estimates include provision for website re-development, which is one-off and should appear separately	Revise estimates to include a line for website re-development costs (£3600)
Newsletter and Annual Report	The annual report could be published on the website and a summary printed in the Council's Newsletter.	Reduce estimates by £750, which is the cost of printing the Annual Performance Plan.

It was therefore proposed and

**RESOLVED** to recommend these revisions to the draft estimates of income and expenditure, for presentation to Finance Committee.

A good deal of consideration was given to other areas of expenditure as follows:

Salaries	Members heard that staff salaries had not been subject to increase since April 2009. Any increase in individual salaries resulted from incremental increase contractually agreed for a small number of individual employees. Any other apparent increase in the cost of salaries was attributed to
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	organisational change over the preceding 3 years. Members recommended that more detailed information on the make up of staffing costs would aid budgetary consideration in future.
Insurance	It was suggested that insurance costs were unnecessarily high and that more detailed review was required to ensure best value. Members recommended that a broker should be asked to quote for a group policy, to replace existing arrangements for individual vehicle cover.
Printing	Discussion was given to increased costs resulting from Members' desire for postal despatch of paper agendas and reports. It was recommended that copies of meeting minutes could be excluded from paper despatch, since these were circulated by e-mail and published on the website.
IT Equipment	An increase in the budget for 2012/13 was explained as necessary to provide additional workstation equipment at the Town Hall Offices, where a manned reception area required such provision.
Town Hall	An allocation for repairs and maintenance comprised contractual costs amounting to £4655 and £5000 for general repairs and maintenance. It was recommended that this second component be reduced, if possible, since current reparatory work should result in a reduced requirement for 2012/13.
Town Hall	It was suggested that a review of rates should be carried out to ensure that rates were not being paid for areas of the building not in use.
KGV Depot	Members discussed the provision for materials and plants and noted that the provision of three carpet beds to commemorate the Olympics and the Diamond Jubilee required increase allocation in 2012.
Medway Centre	The allocation for repairs and maintenance was considered high, in consideration of recent expenditure at the Premises on improvements. Members heard that work necessary to improve the footpaths surfacing at the Medway Centre, costing £1500-£2000, could be funded from this allocation.
Skatepark	Members considered that since a service level agreement with the District Council bound the Town Council to arrange for re-surfacing of the facility at least three times per year, it was not possible to reduce expenditure on this provision.
Town Park	An allocation for repairs and maintenance included for re-decoration of the bandstand, which Member's supported as necessary and which should be carried out in advance of the Park's re-naming on St George's Day.

It was therefore

**RESOLVED** to recommend that consideration of these items be noted.

**CHAIRMAN**