

**HUNTINGDON TOWN COUNCIL****FINANCE COMMITTEE**

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held at the Town Hall, Market Hill, Huntingdon on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

**MINUTES**

Present: Cllrs A Beevor; A Blackwell, D Brown, A Dovans, J Dyne, L George, S Gifford, S Hassell, W Hensley, J Jacobs, P Kadewere, A Mackender-Lawrence, B Manning, S McAdam, B Morrell, S Mulcahy, T Sanderson and R Valatka (Chairman)

Absent: None

**54. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr T Forster.

**55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none

**56. PUBLIC ADDRESS**

There was none.

**57. MINUTES**

Members had before them the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015 (M5). It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED** that these were a true record of the meeting and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

**58. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SUB COMMITTEES**

Members had before them the minutes of the Finance Sub Committee meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015. The Chairman asked members whether they were happy to approve the recommendations contained within the minutes.

One member questioned whether accepting the recommendations of the Sub Committee would mean the Finance Committee would be unable to make changes to the draft budget, therefore it was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED** to note, not approve, the recommendations contained within the minutes of the Finance Sub Committee subject to the requested changes.

The Town Clerk noted that the recommendations from the Staffing Sub Committee were private and confidential, and would be discussed at the end of the meeting.

## 59. **BUDGET**

Members had before them a report on the Precept for 2016/17. One member noted that there were potential savings to be made, but that the budget should consider including school crossing patrols and S106 money.

The Town Clerk recommended that members should go through Appendix D of the report page by page to identify any necessary changes to the draft budget.

Members highlighted the proposed reduction in the Mayor's Purse. One member noted that a 50% reduction in one item seemed excessive. It was suggested that a budget of at least £4000 plus travel expenses would be needed and that reducing the allowance to £3,000 would price many Members out of taking on the role of Mayor.

Another member noted that as cuts to services were being considered, members should set an example by considering internal cuts such as the Mayor's Purse as well. It was noted that a £6,000 allowance for the Mayor's Purse would not benefit members of the public. It was also questioned where the money to increase the Mayor's Purse would be taken from.

Members discussed whether or not travel expenses should be included in the Mayor's Purse or claimed separately. The Town Clerk explained that previously travel expenses were separate to the Mayor's Purse, but had been merged in the 2015/16 budget.

One Member questioned the value in having a Mayor and what the role entailed. It was explained that this was covered in the Mayor's Handbook, and that it was stated in Charter 1205 that the town must have a Mayor. A Member also noted that the Mayor's fundraising team had raised £50,000 for local charities in the last three years.

It was suggested that the costs involved with the Mayor's role should be documented to give member an idea of how much was needed to do the job. It was pointed out that it was hard to predict how much would be needed as there were different events to attend each year.

It was proposed and seconded to set a Mayor's Purse of £4,000 plus travel expenses of up to £1,500. 6 Members voted in favour and 11 Members voted against.

It was proposed and seconded and

**RESOLVED** to set a Mayor's Purse of £4000 to include travel expenses. 9 members voted in favour and 6 members voted against.

A member suggested that the Precept should be decided before any cuts were made. Members then discussed the level at which the Precept should be set. One Member suggested that the Precept should be set at the same level as 2015/16. Another Member noted that a 2-2.5% increase seemed realistic and would increase the Council's capacity to provide services. It was also noted that any roles passed down from HDC/CCC should come with proper funding.

*Clerks Note: Cllr Valatka left the meeting at 19:53 and Vice-Chairman Cllr A Blackwell took the chair.*

The Town Clerk pointed out that Members should consider the increased costs of

insurance, National Insurance, pensions and utilities payments when deciding the precept level.

One member questioned the percentage the Precept was increased by in 2015/16, and it was explained that the Precept had increased 2.5% for Band D properties, and 6.12% overall.

Another member noted that with the income of S106 money, a 0% increase in the Precept should be achievable. The Town Clerk pointed out that there were restrictions on the S106 money and it may mean it could only be spent on Coneygear Park.

A member suggested that it was unnecessary to put aside money for all repairs/improvements in the 2016/17 budget. It was noted that £200,000 had been identified for new play equipment, so money for repairs of old play equipment was not needed.

There was a proposal of a 0% increase (Precept set at £907,463).

A counter proposal of a 2.43% increase (Precept set at £929,550) was proposed and seconded. 8 Members voted in favour and 7 Members voted against, and it was

**RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk should produce a draft budget with an increase of 2.43%.

The Chairman abstained from voting. Cllrs D Brown, W Hensley, B Morrell and T Sanderson voted against

It was then proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED** to close the meeting to the public and press to discuss agenda item 58 ii.

The Town Clerk outlined the proposals from the Staffing Sub Committee, and Members discussed the options.

#### 60. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was noted as the 14<sup>th</sup> January 2016

*Clerks Note: The next meeting to discuss Budget & Precept will now be held on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2016.*

**Chairman**