

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD AT 8.00PM ON MONDAY 19TH DECEMBER 2016 AT THE
CIVIC HALL, POYNTON.

PRESENT

Chairman: Cllr C Gorst

Cllrs: M Beanland, L A Clarke, Mrs R Horsman-Johnson, Mrs S Horsman, H Murray, G King, L Podmore, Mrs J Saunders and G Smith

54. Questions from members of the public

There were no members of the public in attendance.

55. Apologies for absence

None.

56. Declarations of disclosable pecuniary or other interests

None.

57. Previous meeting minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 28th November 2016 are approved as an accurate record (2 abstentions)

58. Receive and consider a written brief from the Clerk on the Town Council's budget for 2017/18, with a recommendation then to be made to the Town Council meeting on Monday 9th January 2017 with regard to the 2017/18 Precept.

The Deputy Clerk spoke on the Town Council's budget for 2017/18. Members received and considered the written brief and Option 1 from the preview report. The provisional precept figure for 2017/18 is £429,313; this is a 7.83% increase over the current year. For a Band D household this is £74.15 for the year for the services provided by the Town Council.

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that all committees except for COPS have reviewed and agreed their provisional budget with a number of savings identified.

The main reasons for the increase include:

- The withdrawal of the precept support grant by Cheshire East Council.
- The revaluation of the Civic Hall which has doubled the business rates. The Town Council are taking action to assess an appeal to the business rates.
- Future provision of the Neighbourhood Policing Team.

The Chair noted that the Clerk and Deputy Clerk have, as requested, reviewed the budget to reduce the precept increase. The Planning committee have agreed to remove £10,000 from their budget. This amount has been allocated to the COPS budget to afford future policing arrangements which are currently subject to change. This action is prudent to ensure contingency.

The Policing Task and Finish Group from their meeting with the Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Sarah Boycott who provided the following update on the future of Neighbourhood Policing:

- The ACC has indicated that they will be looking for fully funded PCSOs from 2018/19 at a cost of about £35,000 per annum per PCSO.
- Part funding will not be an option.
- There is a Bill going through Parliament consulting on offering voluntary PCSOs but this is not secure at this stage; members agreed that this will have limitations and be impractical in providing the service required in Poynton.
- Bespoke service level agreements (SLAs) will no longer be available.
- Those present informed the ACC of the level and type of service Poynton needs by citing past experience and practical actions.
- The Policing Task and Finish Group are continuing to consider and research other options for the future of policing in Poynton.
- A recommendation by the Task and Finish Group is required by September 2017 before implementation in 2018.

Members also discussed the cost of the Christmas Fest. As resolved at the COPS meeting on 12th December 2016 members agreed that local businesses and retailers are approached to contribute towards the cost of the Christmas Fest. It was noted that the Christmas Fest was originally organised by the Town Council to help local retailers promote their businesses. The Town Council will also assist by recovering VAT on the Christmas Fest costs where possible.

RESOLVED: It was proposed that the Town Council's budget for 2017/18 is approved. That the precept for 2017/18 is recommended to the Town Council meeting on Monday 9th January 2017 (NC)

59. Receive and consider the interim internal audit report.

The interim internal audit report has not been received from the auditors.

RESOLVED: That the interim internal audit report is deferred to the next F & GP committee meeting (NC)

60. Approve the revisions to the Town Council's Financial Regulations by the Task and Finish group.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council's Financial Regulations are reviewed and revised by a Working Party of three councillors. That the Working Party comprises Cllrs Beanland, Clarke and Gorst as agreed (NC)

61. Receive and consider an update from the Deputy Clerk relating to challenging the non-domestic business rates 2015 onwards.

The Deputy Clerk provided the following update relating to challenging the non-domestic business rates 2015 onwards:

- The Deputy Clerk has met with Richard Wackett, the business ratings consultant from Montague Evans, at the Civic Hall on 13th December 2016.
- Richard has confirmed that in his opinion the business rates assessment is excessive and strongly recommends an early urgent appeal in January 2017.

RESOLVED: That the verbal report from the Deputy Clerk is received. That the committee grant authority to the Clerk/Deputy Clerk to proceed with the appeal (NC)

62. Note the bank reconciliation for November 2016 as verified by the Chairman.

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the bank reconciliation for November 2016 has not been produced due to some outstanding documentation.

RESOLVED: That the item to note the bank reconciliation for November 2016 is deferred to the next committee meeting (NC)

63. Receive the payment schedule for November 2016.

RESOLVED: That the item to receive the payment schedule for November 2016 is deferred to the next committee meeting (NC)

64. Consider and agree any communication messages arising from this meeting.

The communication messages arising from this meeting are the identified areas of impact on the precept increase:

- Business rate inflation.
- The Town Council are following professional advice on the issue of the business rates.
- Loss of the CE precept support grant.
- General inflation.
- Other relevant points as noted in the Deputy Clerk's report.

That the impact on the precept is publicised following the Town Council meeting in January 2017.

RESOLVED: That the precept is publicised following the Town Council meeting in January 2017 (NC)

Meeting End Time: 9.05pm