

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of an Extra Ordinary meeting of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee of Sandy Town Council which was held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 7th November 2022 commencing at 7.15pm.

Present: Cllrs N Aldis, P Blaine, J Hewitt, R Lacey, A Lock, R Lock, C Osborne (Chair), M Pettitt., M Scott and P Sharman.

Absent: None

In attendance: Cllr S Sutton and Mrs N Sewell (Clerk)

The Chair welcomed Cllr R Lacey to his first meeting of PF&R Committee

1 Apologies for absence (73-2022/23)

There were none.

2 Declarations of interest (74 -2022/23)

- i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest – none
- ii) Non-disclosable Pecuniary Interest – none
- iii) Dispensations – none

3 Public Participation Session (75-2022/23)

No members of the public were present and no questions received prior to the meeting.

4 2023/24 Budget Review (76-2022/23)

Members received the following reports as part of the 2023/24 budget setting and precept process.

- i) Annual Budget Report (Actual YTD Month 7) Summary
- ii) Annual Budget Report (Actual YTD Month 7) Detail
- iii) Accountant Budget Recommendations

The Chair explained that the current tax base for 2023/24 had reduced by 0.22% and as such if the Town Council were to keep its precept at the same level as 2022/23 that would see a decrease in income.

Summarising the Accountant's Budget Recommendations the Chair explained that if the Council were to make no changes, the recommended precept request would see an 8.17% increase to charges, which amounts to an extra 24.26p per week payment based on a Band D property.

The largest cost is on staff costs and this was reviewed first. Members were made aware that a new National Pay Award had been agreed and

Actions

Admin

Sandy Town Council

that this increase, which would see an extra £1,925 added onto every pay scale, would need to be backdated to 1st April 2022. On the lower end of the scales this accounted for an 8.8% increase and circa 4% on the higher scales. The Accountant's recommendation was to allow for a further 10% increase to the Pay Award for 2023/24.

It was **noted** that the heading in Appendices I and II should read To be agreed.

The Chair then went through the Annual Budget Report (Actual YTD Month 7) Detail line by line and the following amendments were made:

- CC 401, 4006 (H&S Costs/Consultancy): Increased by £700 to £1,300 in line with new costs as agreed at the PF&R meeting on 31.10.2022.
- CC 402, 1201 (Rent Received Etc): Income increased from nil to £300 to reflect charges to CBC for election hire.
- CC 402, 4010 (Miscellaneous Staff Costs): £100 decreased to nil as costs are in CC 401.
- CC 402, 4023 (Printing & Stationery): Stationery budget reduced by £300 back to £700 as printing costs should be coded in 4026.
- CC 403, 4042/4043 (Equipment/Vehicle Fuel): Reduction of £1,000 to reflect reduced costs for running an electric vehicle.
- CC 406, 4037 (Grounds Maintenance): Reduced by £800 back to £700, as high cost in current year is a result of £600 miscoding.
- CC 408, 1236 (Market Fees): Income increased from nil to £300 to reflect anticipated market fees.
- CC 408, 1238 (Other Income Car Park): Income increased from nil to £200 to reflect anticipated car park passes.
- CC 602, 4033 (Annual Report & Newsletter): Budget reduced by £3,000 to nil to reflect decision not to advertise in the Bedfordshire Bulletin.
- CC 602, 4210 (Election Costs): Budget reduced by £4,000 to nil as agreed to use EMR for any election costs.

These changes see a total reduction of £9,300 to the recommended Budget, and reduces the Precept Funding Required from £677,933 to £668,633, the increase required from £49,813 to £40,513 and Band D Equivalent from £167-51p to £165-22p and hence a £10-36p or 6.7% increase.

RESOLVED that the 10% increase in provision proposed by the Accountant for salary increases was acceptable.

The following queries and questions were raised:

- Did the accountant have any 'inside knowledge' that General Rates were to rise by 10.6%, reflected in code 4011 throughout?

Sandy Town Council

- A future meeting would need to look at what equipment is required for better visuals/acoustics in the Chamber and provision of lap tops vs. paper copies. Currently £2,000 allowed for minor equipment in code 402-4040.
- Cemetery Working Group to bring back in this budget cycle, total capital costs still required to complete the work and revenue costs for skip(s).
- Play Areas Rent (CC500-1201): Clerk to check on income from the Pantaloons performances.
- Jenkins' Pavilion Professional Fees – Reduction of 25% (£4,250) in payment for January to March 2024 to be considered at the 16th January 2023 P, F & R.
- Notice would need to be given to the Bedfordshire Bulletin to cease our advert from 1st April 2023.
- A future meeting would need to consider how Council publicises itself in place of the Bulletin (deferred to CS&E).
- A future meeting would need to consider number of vehicles to be retained (deferred to PF&R).
- A future Council may need to rebuild the EMR for elections if more seats are contested than currently predicted.
- Cllr Aldis queried the figure in the middle column of Appendix III 'Precept Funding Required' and where the figure had come from. DCK to be asked to clarify.
- STC would publicise that it is looking to reduce costs early while still needing to spend money to invest in the community.

5 Payments for approval (77-2022/23)

Members received a report from the Clerk regarding a payment for £1,008.56 to Ben Burgess for the replacement of a water pump on the tractor.

RESOLVED to agree payment.

6 Chairman's Items (78-2022/23):

There were none

7 Date of Next Meetings (79-2022/23)

Tues 15th November 2022 (informal with Accountant)

Monday 12th December 2022

Meeting closed at 21.18