

MIDDLEWICH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Town Council's Finance, Policy and Governance Committee, held in the Wych Centre, Civic Way on Monday 7th November 2016, commencing at 6.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor S Moss (in the Chair) and Councillors PJ Farrell, K Kingston, DJ Latham, B Walmsley (from 6.05pm) and W Walmsley

ALSO PRESENT

Councillors CL Bulman (from 6.45pm) and J Eaton

OFFICERS PRESENT

JPA Williams, Town Clerk and DJ French, Assistant Town Clerk

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors MA Hunter and JD Parry due to prior commitments, SN McGrory due to a family bereavement and DA Williams due to work commitments

164 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Declarations of Interest were made:

- Councillor W Walmsley declared an interest in any matters relating to advertising;
- Councillors PJ Farrell and S Moss declared interests as Trustees of Middlewich Community Trust;
- Councillor PJ Farrell declared an interest as a member of the Good Neighbours scheme;
- Councillors J Eaton and W Walmsley declared interests as Committee Members of the Middlewich Community and Youth Project;
- Councillor DJ Latham declared an interest in any matters relating to the Ansa site as a near neighbour consultee.

PART TWO

RESOLVED: that the Meeting be moved into Part 2 session for the remainder of the business to enable an open and free debate on matters that are not appropriate for the public domain at this stage

165 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10th October be confirmed as a correct record.

166 DRAFT TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET

The Town Clerk introduced the second version of the draft budget which had been amended in accordance with the recommendations of the previous meeting.

The Committee went through the detail of the budget and raised questions and issues on various matters:

- Hire of Function Suite/Wych Centre – the Town Clerk explained that this was for room hire for meetings; the Town Council received a discount for room hire and this figure could be reduced to £600;
- IT and phones – this referred to the capital costs and the contract with the IT support service; the phone system had been damaged when the building had been flooded and the insurance claim was still to be settled - the phone system would be funded to some extent by the insurance but the amount was still to be settled;
- Subscriptions – this referred to the annual fee paid to Cheshire Association of Local Councils;
- Utilities - Members asked if these costs – water, gas and electricity – were now apportioned between the Town Council and Middlewich Community Trust? The Town Clerk confirmed that this was the case – one gas bill was received so he had to apportion it; the electricity bill was now split between the two buildings although the supplier was currently billing the Trust for the total amount;
- Telephones including Events mobile – as above this was awaiting confirmation of the insurance claim. The Events mobile was the mobile phone for the Events Manager; it was capped at £30.00 pcm; the Town Clerk agreed to look into the current contract to see if the cost could be reduced;
- Travelling expenses – this amount referred mostly to the Town Clerk’s travel although other staff did undertake occasional work journeys; this figure could be reduced to £600;
- Office supplies including water machine, newspapers – the water machine contract was to end and newspapers would be cancelled so this figure could be reduced to 2,500;
- Printing and photocopying – black and white copying was cheap, colour printing tended to be produced for events and heritage. The Town Clerk would look into this further including whether it was more economical to have colour printing done externally;

- Election Contingency – it was agreed to remove this amount from the budget;
- Staff costs – the Town Clerk was still looking into the staffing costs;
- Community Support – the schools grants had been used for swimming lessons in the past but it was noted that schools were given free or reduced price usage of the Victoria Hall alongside grant funding; it was suggested that the General Power of Competence Grants be merged with the schools grants at an overall budget figure of £4,000;
- Community Pride – the budget figure did not take account of the income received from local businesses for hanging baskets. The Town Clerk would investigate the costs versus income and report back to the next meeting;
- Community Safety – PCSO – the Committee discussed the value of the PCSO bearing in mind that they could be required to work elsewhere in the Borough; the Town Clerk reported on issues elsewhere with the PCSO service and value for money. It was felt that local Councils had little control over the PCSO and what was received for the investment. It was agreed that the budget figure be reduced to 12,000;
- Community Safety – CCTV – Members discussed the length of contract, monitoring information and which cameras were for community safety and which were mainly used by the Police. The Town Clerk agreed to investigate further and report back to the next meeting;
- MCYP – a report had now been received from MCYP outlining their work over the past year. It was agreed that the budget figure remain at £3,000;
- Furniture and decoration – it was noted that offices were generally poorly decorated and Room 1 in particular, which had been damaged in the flood, was in need of redecoration and new carpets. The main office was also the first impression of the Town Council to visitors. It was agreed that the sum of £1,500 be added into the budget for furniture and decoration in the Victoria Building subject to further information to the next meeting;
- Branding – Phase 1 was now complete and work had been paid for. Members discussed any possible future contribution from Cheshire East Council and whether the Town Council should be able to make a contribution; it was felt this could be taken out of balances if required. It was agreed to reduce the branding figure to 0;
- Highways Signage (pump priming) and General Fund for new ideas-projects - it was agreed that these budget headings, along with Town Centre regeneration should be put together into one budget heading of Community Funding with a budget amount of £8,000;
- Events – cycle race/fun run/Pedal Power – as a number of these events had not taken place and Pedal Power was not a Middlewich Town Council event, it was agreed to reduce this figure to £250;
- Market and Town Centre events – it was agreed to reduce this figure to £2,000 to include the Town Crier event;

- Christmas Fayre – the Town Clerk agreed to liaise with the Events Manager to provide a breakdown of costs;
- Heritage - Roman Festival – a breakdown of the costs and income and an Action Plan would be provided for the next meeting;
- Christmas lights – the Council was in the third year of a 3 year contract; for next year the figure could be reduced to £14,000;
- Projects and commitments – it was noted that the 2 figures of £1,000 each for the Railway Campaign and Air Quality Testing were both contingency amounts; it was therefore agreed to put these under a new heading of Contingencies.

RESOLVED:

That:

(a) the draft budget as submitted be approved for further consideration subject to the following amendments:

- Hire of Function Suite/Wych Centre – reduce from £1,250 to £600;
- Office supplies – reduce from £3,000 to £2,500;
- Travelling expenses – reduce from £800 to £600;
- Election Contingency – remove figure of £8,000;
- General Power of Competence Grants – include school grants in this figure and increase to £4,000;
- Schools Grants – removed from budget as now incorporated into General Power of Competence Grants as above;
- Community Safety, PCSO – reduce from £24,000 to £12,000;
- Community Fund – remove heading and budget figure of £3,000 from Community Support and include in Growth Areas alongside other headings;
- Furniture and redecoration Victoria Building – add in figure of £1,500;
- Branding – remove figure of £5,000;
- Highways Strategy and General Fund – to be put under one heading to include Town Centre Regeneration with a budget figure of £8,000;
- Cycle race/fun run/Pedal Power – reduce from £500 to £250;
- Market and Town Centre Events – to include Town Crier event and be reduced from £3,000 to £2,000;
- Christmas lights – reduce from £17,500 to £14,000;
- Town Centre regeneration – remove and include under Highways Strategy and General fund as a growth area;
- A new heading of Contingencies be added to cover Air Quality Testing and Railway Campaign – both to remain at £1,000.

(b) further information be brought back to the next meeting on matters identified at the meeting including :

- Reducing the cost of the Events Manager’s mobile phone contract;
- Printing costs and whether it would be more economical to use an external printing company rather than the photocopier;
- Community Pride figures to include income received from hanging baskets;
- Breakdown of costs for the Christmas Fayre;
- Breakdown of costs and Action Plan for the Roman Festival;
- Further information about CCTV including contract terms, monitoring arrangements and use of cameras;
- Further information on costs of decorating the Victoria Building;

(c) the draft budget as amended along with the additional information be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

Date of next meeting –Monday 5 December 2016 at 6.00pm

Cllr S Moss, Chairman

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