

**Minutes of a Special meeting of Middlewich Town Council, held in the Victoria Hall, Civic Way, Middlewich on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2019, commencing at 7.15 pm**

## **Part One**

### **Present**

Councillor Russell Watkinson (Vice Chairman in the Chair) and Councillors Carol Bulman, Pauline Hickey, Chris Jones, Mike Hunter, David Latham, Jonathan Parry, Vicky Perez, Helen Watkinson and Gareth Williams

Council Officers:

Denise French, Assistant Town Clerk and Nicola Antoney, Administrative Assistant

#### **1. To receive and approve apologies for absence**

An apology for absence was received and approved from Councillor Sean Boyle (illness)

#### **2. To note any declarations of Members' Interests on any agenda item**

None.

#### **3. Introduction to the first draft budget**

The Vice Chairman welcomed everyone to this initial budget meeting. Members were keen to involve the public with the forthcoming budget process. It was noted that there were certain core items that would require budget funding including staffing, buildings, Civic support and heritage. Members expressed the aim of achieving a better balance between reserves and spending. Members discussed the implications of money allocated to budgets but being unspent and how to deal with this in future. It was noted that the Council had to have sufficient resources to be able to function for 6 months. The Assistant Town Clerk explained the role of the External Auditor in scrutinising finances. The Auditor would seek explanations if it was felt the Town Council had too much in reserves.

#### **4. Open Forum**

Members of the public were invited to make comments and a resident expressed a view that although the draft budget made reference to detailed items of expenditure there appeared to be no reference to an overall Vision. It was suggested that a Council Vision should be the starting point; from which an action plan would follow with details of actions would be achieved.

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The Council considered the first draft budget. The following points were discussed:

- The importance of partnership working including with Cheshire East Council and Ansa; and with the police to make the town feel safer;
- There was an important role for heritage and celebrating and promoting what is already here as well as the history – canals, waterways, the salt industry. The Brine Pump project was discussed including its educational value and opportunities for income from the town’s heritage;
- The demise of the town centre was an issue of concern;
- The importance of ensuring that value was added which may not necessarily be monetary value. Members discussed opportunities to make small improvements to the environment or appearance of the town without incurring huge expenditure;
- the possibility of maximising income from the Victoria Hall;
- the current state of the Council owned buildings – Victoria Buildings and Victoria Hall - was raised and the importance of recognising potential issues.

**Resolved 8232:** That the first draft budget be received and the points raised be considered as part of the overall budget process.

The meeting concluded at 8.05pm.

Councillor Russell Watkinson

Vice Chairman

Signed.....2019