



Middlewich Town Council
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Minutes of the Five Hundred and Twenty sixth Meeting of Middlewich Town Council, held via Zoom video conferencing on Monday 30th November 2020, commencing at 7.15 pm

Present

Councillors Mike Hunter (Chairman), Jonathan Parry, Graham Orme, Carol Bulman, Vicky Perez, Pauline Hickey, David Latham, Gareth Williams and Sean Boyle

In attendance:

Lisa Benskin - Town Clerk

1. To receive and approve apologies for absence

Cllr Chris Jones (Personal Business)

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

Councillor Latham indicated that he had previously been involved in and received income from the Folk and Boat Festival.

3. Public Participation

The Councillors considered the queries raised as part of report F2043 and responded as follows:

1. Cllr Hunter confirmed that it was the Council's intention to reduce the precept
2. The comments raised by the second member of the public were noted, as it was noted that agreed that getting footfall into the Town was important hence the Make it Middlewich project. The Town Clerk noted that whilst the Fiver Fest had not been well received by businesses, there was a lot more interest in the Fairy Trail that had been planned for Christmas as part of this overall project.

Members noted their concerns with respect to the reporting of the Budget setting process by the local press, which had resulted in a large amount of concern from members of the public about Folk and Boat Festival being cancelled when a request for event costs to simply be removed as part of

a draft prepared to assist budget setting. Members and the Town Clerk noted they were happy to answer any questions that reporters may have. Cllr Hunter indicated that if he were Chairman next year, he would like to change the way the budget was prepared, the first half containing the running costs and the second part would be the project part. These would be costed and detail how much each project would add to the precept and letters would be sent to residents asking which projects they would support.

3. Members noted they had already resolved to get small gifts for the over 70s as part of this year's budget.

The Town Clerk advised that it was not possible to Furlough staff wholly paid for by the precept, as this was the case for all Council staff other than the caretakers, who were furloughed. As such to Furlough the Events Manager as has been suggested numerous times is not legally possible. Cllr Hunter noted that he was not keen to lose another nice historical building within the Town, especially considering the covenant that runs with the land would make it difficult to run.

Sharing the Clerk with another Town, due to the volume of work is not possible.

Cllr Hunter noted that until we know the outcome of the White Paper and its effect on Neighbourhood plans.

A further question was raised by a member of the public with respect to the Bellway Roundabout and whether Cllr Hunter had yet received an update on the safety review. Cllr Hunter indicated that he was very much chasing on this and had not forgotten about the issue and would provide an update as soon as he could. Cllr Hunter indicated that he had made an FOI to Cheshire Police which had shown no instances had been recorded.

Another member of the public stated that they hoped any budget cuts that were made don't detract from the Town's overall appearance and find a way to keep in looking nice.

4. To consider the third draft of the Council and Committee Budget for 21/22

The Town Clerk noted that as well as the draft budget in the agenda pack, she was asked to also prepare a budget just containing the essential costs or 'running costs'. This second budget v4 resulted in a budget reduction of £3 on a band D property but it had cut out CCTV, Floriculture, Youth Projects.

There was also a discussion about the Toilets and works to make bring them up to standard once they had been transferred. Members noted that whilst costs could be looked into, it was likely that the transfer would take place in 21/22 but there would be no funds for refurbishment unless grant funding or another funding model could be looked at. The Town Clerk was asked to check if business rates would be payable on the toilets if they remained closed for the foreseeable future.

8411 Members **RESOLVED** for the Town Clerk to take v4 of the Budget which detailed the base costs, and price the items taken out to show the affect they would have on the overall precept figure and on a band D property individually to assist at the next meeting.

5. To note dates of forthcoming meetings

Members requested that a further budget meeting be arranged for Monday 14th December.

DRAFT