

MINUTES OF THE WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT UNTIED REFORMED CHURCH HALL ON MONDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M Lithgow (Chair),
Councillors M Barr, A Govier, J Lloyd, M McGuffie and J Thorne
IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors C Booth, C Govier and K Wheatley
David Farrow – Town Clerk
Alice Kendall – Deputy Clerk
One member of the press

358 APOLOGIES

No apologies had been received.

359 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Lloyd and A Govier have a standing personal interest declaration relating to MTMIT, the Council's IT consultant, being a former customer of the company.

Councillor Thorne has a standing personal interest declaration relating to MTMIT, the Council's IT consultant, being a personal friend of the company owner.

360 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present.

361 MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2023.

362 24-25 BUDGET

Officers had prepared a paper and draft budget which was circulated with the agenda. There was a discussion at length about the possible impact of the financial situation of Somerset Council. It was agreed that the Policy and Resources Committee will discuss this further at their December meeting as more information is likely to have been received that will inform what the requirements on the Town Council's budget will be.

The Deputy Clerk displayed the draft budget, and it was reviewed by Cost Centre.

Administration – No changes proposed.

28-30 Fore Street Costs – It was noted that this was a new Cost Centre given the current discussion to purchase the building. It was noted that in depth refurbishment works are likely to be able to be funded by grants.

Affiliation Fees – No changes proposed.

Allotments – No changes proposed.

Christmas – the change in the Lights Install line were noted. During this item, the Clerk referenced an e-mail from Somerset Council which was circulated prior to the meeting explaining the withdrawal of the free parking on Saturdays leading up to Christmas. It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee approve, under their delegated powers, to cover the cost of free parking for Saturday 2nd December (£1,250) and that it is recommended to Full Council

that the Council fund free parking for the further three Saturdays (9th, 16th & 23rd December) at a total cost of £3,750. These items to be paid from the Town Centre Projects budget.

It was further **RESOLVED** to add a new 'Free Parking' cost code to the 24-25 budget in the amount of £5,000 to fund free parking on Saturdays in December going forward.

Community Services – No changes proposed.

Community Warden – it was **RESOLVED** to increase the sundries line to £3,000. It was further **RESOLVED** that an amount should be placed into Earmarked Reserves to make allowance for the replacement of the Council's vehicle. This amount to be added to each year with the opening amount being based on a depreciation value.

Cost of Democracy – No changes proposed.

Environment and Planning – It was **RESOLVED** to add a £10,000 cost code for contributions to the work being carried out in relation to the Greenway Cycle Route. It was agreed that if not spent in the 24-25 year this amount will transfer into an earmarked reserve. It was further **RESOLVED** to increase the Green Corridor cost code budget to £30,000.

Grants – No changes proposed.

Income – No changes proposed.

IT, Website & Internet – No changes proposed.

Play Areas – No changes proposed.

Pop Up Shop – No changes proposed.

Staff Costs & Expenses – It was resolved to increase the training cost centre to £2,000.

Town Centre – No changes proposed. It was noted that the Co-Working Space cost code had been moved to Earmarked Reserves to meet the Council's commitment of funding for rent and utilities at the Kings Arms project.

Unitary Devolution – as per the comments made at the beginning of the agenda item, it was agreed that further work is required on this Cost Centre. It was proposed that the Toilets cost code be increased to £25,000, it was not seconded. The Policy and Resources Committee will report to Full Council on the requirements for this section. At present, Somerset Council has only indicated that it will ask the Town Council to take up the management of North Street Toilets and the planting and maintenance of hanging baskets and flower beds in the town centre.

Earmarked Reserves – The annual top up of the allowance for Elections and the Film Festival were noted, as was the requirement for a larger reserve for works at the proposed train station. It was reported that the balance needed is likely to be double what is currently held (i.e. £30,000 rather than £15,000). As the project is likely to come to fruition in the 25-26 year, it was **RESOLVED** that the top up amount required be split over the next two years.

It was further **RESOLVED** that, the Cost of Living reserve balance be reviewed by officers at the year end and that any balance over £20,000 be transferred back to the general fund.

It was proposed that the Post Office Provision reserve be closed, and the funds transferred to back into the general fund, there was no seconder.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Environmental Improvement reserve be increased to £40,000.

Before the close of the meeting, Councillors asked about the likely precept level. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk reported that it was too early to give an indication as the agreed changes needed to be made to the budget and that the tax base had not yet been received. The Deputy Clerk also reported that the Council needed to assess how the amount of general reserve is calculated which will in turn, affect the precept amount.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.10 pm.

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