

WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ADDITIONAL POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD AT THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HALL, WELLINGTON 27 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 5.30pm

Present: Councillors C Govier (Chair), M Barr, A Govier, M Lithgow, J Lloyd, M McGuffie, J Thorne and K Wheatley.

Dave Farrow, Town Clerk
Alice Kendall, Deputy Town Clerk and Deputy Responsible Financial Officer

Councillor C Booth was in attendance (from 5.40pm)

One member of the press was in attendance.

351 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES AND APPROVE THE REASONS GIVEN

No apologies had been received.

352 MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve and sign the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 10 October 2023.

353 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

354 QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

355 LONGFORTH ROAD TOILET BLOCK UPDATE

Sketch scheme design/layout options were tabled at the meeting for consideration.

After some discussion, it was **RESOLVED**

- (i) To ask Ravensdale to cost out the build of a traditional build three cubicle building plus storage but with a larger store area than detailed in the sketch scheme;
- (ii) To recommend to Full Council that Healthmatic be commissioned to develop a comparative design and specification package for a modular building option based upon the preferred design/layout option selected above at a cost of £3,500 plus VAT – the output of which will be used by Ravensdale to prepare a feasibility Order of Cost Estimate considering ‘traditional’ and ‘modular’ options.
- (iii) To recommend to Full Council that, in principle, the balance of costs for a rebuild on the Longforth Road site should be funded through a Public Works Loan Board Loan with a final decision on the amount to be borrowed to be made when costs are known.

356 TO CONSIDER RESOLVING TO EXCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was resolved that under section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting. The reason for this is that item 7 on the agenda referred to matters which are commercially sensitive and confidential.

357 PURCHASE OF 28-30 FORE STREET

The minute for this item is confidential as it contains commercially sensitive information.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 6.20pm.

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Councillor Catherine Govier
Chairman

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**12 DECEMBER 2023****DEVELOPING A DEVOLUTION CONTINGENCY BUDGET****1. Introduction**

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to set out some options for the Committee to consider to form the basis of making a recommendation to the Full Council on the setting of a Devolution Contingency Budget as part of the 2024/25 Town Council budget.

2. Background

- 2.1 The need for a devolution contingency budget line in the 2024/25 budget arises from the financial challenges facing Somerset Council and the request from the Leader of the Council for city, town and parish councils to take responsibility for managing assets and services in their areas to help it address its deficit. The issues arising from this request have been discussed previously so won't be referenced in this report.
- 2.2 Discussions have been taking place with Somerset Council managers in relation to what the devolution of services and assets might look like but at the time of writing the only definitive proposals relate to the North Street Car Park Public Toilets and the planting and maintenance of hanging baskets/planters in the town centre. Somerset Council will be setting its budget on 20 February with its Executive meeting on the 7 February. It is suggested that The Town Council leave its budget setting until as late as possible to see what if any detailed proposals come out of that process.
- 2.3 In the absence of little certainty at this stage the Council needs to consider setting a Devolution Contingency Budget that enables it to be flexible enough to either (i) respond to in year requests for funding or taking responsibility for services or (ii) prepare for taking on responsibility in 2025/6 and also spread the cost of doing so.
- 2.4 There are two documents attached. One summarise the possible services that we may be asked to pay for/take responsibility for possibly in 2024/5 or 2025/6 and this need to form the basis of setting a devolution contingency budget. The other is an indication of how services could be structured in the Town Council as it takes on more responsibilities.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to consider how it wishes to proceed in recommending a Devolution Contingency Budget to the Town Council:
- 3.2 Whether it wishes to recommend to the Town Council that it defers setting a budget and precept to as late as possible to ensure it has as much information as possible in relation to the assets and services it may have to take responsibility for.

Dave Farrow
Town Clerk
11 December 2023

Extracts from Somerset Council Executive Report and Implications

Implications	Resources	Cost (where known)
<p>Charging for emptying bins/Street Cleaning Services</p> <p>The contract for street cleaning in Wellington currently sits with ID Verde and runs until January 2025 and we have been advised that nothing will change until that time. The value of the contract is unknown.</p> <p>Options post January 2025:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Somerset Council deliver street cleaning throughout Wellington and charge the Council for doing so. 2. Somerset Council deliver street cleaning in areas outside the town centre and charge and the Town Council take responsibility for town centre cleaning. 3. Town Council take responsibility for all street cleaning and either undertake directly or contract a provider to do so. <p>Risk – High</p> <p>Whatever option is taken there will be a cost from January 2025. Suggestion is to start to build a budget in 2024/5. Amount uncertain at this point.</p>	<p>Funding for contracting services</p> <p>Funding for contracting services</p> <p>Funding for staff and equipment</p>	<p>Cost of part time street cleaner plus materials</p>
<p>Heritage Services</p> <p>Assume this may mean support to heritage organisations but think we can assume that support for heritage at risk is also at risk. Given the amount of heritage at risk sites in the town this will be an issue.</p>	<p>Specialist Consultant 12 days a year @£450 a day</p>	<p>£5,400</p>

<p>Risk – High – option to commission a number of days specialist advice/support across the year.</p> <p>Heritage at Risk has asked that WTC take on the coordination of tours at Toneworks to maintain the profile of the work – will be chargeable although only nominal. Town Council can retain a share of the income</p>		<p>Staff time</p>
<p>CCTV this was listed as an excluded service from the devo process in a presentation made to Clerks recently. The fact its listed here suggests whilst excluded from local management a central service will be charged for. The lack of a Town Council contribution to the service was noted in 2021 when there was a suggestion that the number of cameras in the town may be reduced. Other town councils do contribute to the cost of the scheme.</p> <p>Risk – High</p> <p>Reductions in the provision of leisure activities, and reduced support to theatres, visitor centres, tourism services – no specific services of this type delivered in Wellington. However promotion of Wellington may be a priority for the Town Council so it can chose how it manages that.</p> <p>Risk – Low.</p>		<p>c£30k- c£5k per camera</p>
<p>Maintenance of ditches, grips, drains, gullies, grass and hedge cutting, weed treatments, road markings, signs and paths.</p> <p>Concept of localised delivery of these sorts of activities trialled in Exmor (Highway Steward) and deemed a success. Was funded but won't be from 1 April.</p> <p>Risk – High</p>		<p>Costs unknown</p>

<p>Options</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Council buy in to Highway Steward Scheme delivered through Somerset Council contracted service with other local councils – cost unknown 2. Council buy in to elements of the scheme with others being undertaken by the Community Warden e.g. ditches, drains, gullies, grass and hedge cutting, weed treatments. Could offer services to surrounding parishes. 3. Council undertake all activities with option of offering services to neighbouring parishes. 	<p>Cost of buying service</p> <p>Cost of expanding CW team</p> <p>Income from surrounding parishes</p>	
<p>Reducing funding for technical studies and partnerships We have already contributed funding to studies like the LCWIP. May be asked to contribute to future studies but can determine whether we wish to engage at the time</p> <p>Risk – Low – no need to budget</p>		
<p>Removing discretionary elements of the concessionary travel scheme, and reducing public bus subsidies, including support to park & ride.</p> <p>The Council has already said it wishes to explore subsidising bus travel and introducing community transport – this work will continue and if a proposal is forthcoming supported a budget will be set in 2025/6.</p> <p>Risk – Low – no need to budget</p>		
<p>Contributing to cost of opening of recycling centres listed in Bill Revans letter. Local councils may be asked to contribute to the cost of keeping sites open for more days.</p> <p>Risk – Medium</p>		<p>Cost unknown</p>

Activities/assets referenced in Bil Revans letter/other not covered above

Asset/Service	Implications/Risk	Resources
Play Areas Maintenance	<p>Nineteen across the town, two of which the Town Council are already responsible for. No requirement on SC to provide Risk – High.</p> <p>Weekly checks and bin emptying/litter picking to be undertaken by Community Warden team, grass cutting initially contracted. Need to build contingency for replacement and repair - to be calculated in 2024/5</p>	£30,000 plus community warden team expansion
<p>Green/Recreational Spaces – playing fields</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation Ground • Playing Field • Dobree Park • Nature Reserves • Skate Park • Petanque Terrain 	<p>Risk – High</p> <p>Playing Field/ Recreation Ground/Dobree Park. Likelihood will be charged for services currently being delivered with ownership to be transferred at later date. Need to check lease arrangements with football/cricket club. Suggest initially contract for two years whist determining how to deliver in the future. Costs to be established.</p> <p>Green Flag/ Britain in Bloom – likely to be asked to pay for cost of entry</p> <p>May not take responsibility until 2025/6 – if so suggest 50% of suggested budget set in 2024/5</p> <p>Nature Reserves – minimal SC input – managed by voluntary groups – discuss with TTW/others</p>	<p>£300k - £350k</p> <p>Green Flag - £430</p> <p>B in B - £300</p> <p>£150k/£175k</p>

	Skate Park/Petanque – health and safety liabilities/maintenance/upgrading. Costs to be established.	Unknown
Wellington Park/War Memorial	Risk – High – issue with lodge which is privately let - provides income	SC currently budget £46k with income of c£5k from lodge
Cemetery	Risk - Medium/High other town councils in Somerset manage cemeteries in their patch – cost to be identified. Initially will need to contract specialist services form Somerset Council/another contractor	Costs unknown
Bus Shelters	Risk High – maintenance/equipment already factored in to budget. Need to expand community warden team	Expand community warden team
Coordination of Early Intervention activities	<p>Given the financial situation of Somerset Council there will be a focus on protecting statutory functions and non-statutory function will be at risk. Activities undertaken by the One Team Co-ordinator and Somerset Connect Champion fall into the latter category. This role is vital in coordinating early intervention and support for the more vulnerable members of the towns community and would be a significant loss if Somerset Council ceased to fund it</p> <p>Risk – High but 2025/6? Suggest budget for 50% of Community Development Officer post this year with the balance next.</p>	
New Staffing	<p>Likely increasing in staffing needed to deliver services. Initial thinking is:</p> <p>New full time Open Spaces Officer Additional full time Community Warden Community Development Officer Street Cleaner (from 1 February 2025)</p>	£115,000
Existing Staffing	Increases in complexity and breadth of services being delivered by the Council will require a review of levels of responsibility and salary of	£10,000

	existing staff. The size of budget and amount of devolved services the Town Council could be responsible for takes it n to the next size of council for grading purposes.	
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Potential Structure of Activities/Roles post April 2024

Town Clerk

Finance	Operations	Open Spaces	Community Development	Projects	Office/Admin Support
Budget management – preparing annual budgets, monthly budget monitoring/reporting/precept setting.	Managing either the direct delivery of services that relate to these areas of work or the management of contracts delivering	Managing either the direct delivery of services that relate to these areas of work or the management of contracts delivering the work	One team coordinator role - case work/coordination of and liaising with voluntary groups and agencies/record keeping/reporting to Somerset Council.	Cades Farm Community Hall	First point of contact - reception/phone
Internal control systems	Developing and monitoring work plans for all activities– day to day/medium/long term.	Developing and monitoring work plans for all activities– day to day/medium/long term.	Support delivery of county wide initiatives in Wellington e.g. from Somerset Council/health/education	Identification of funding opportunities – grants/sponsors hip	Council/Committee meeting papers prep
Audit Preparation and response	Allotment management	Green spaces management – Green Corridor (with GCAB) Wellington Park, Playing Fields/Recreation Ground/Dobree Park/estate management	Development of community plan	Support community engagement	Website/social media
Payroll/tax/NI pension etc	Street Cleaning/bin emptying	Management of Play areas e.g. inspection/maintenance bin emptying/grass cutting	Management of Kings Arms Community Hub – coordination of spoke activities across the town	Heritage??	Press release prep
Investment management	Public toilets – cleaning/maintenance	Town Council buildings		Community art projects	General admin support for other activities
Asset management records	Bus shelters	Developing programmes of repair/replacement to inform budget setting.		Development of community transport	Event preparation and delivery support
Manage procurement processes/drafting specs/contractual arrangements	Link to Highways Steward functions	Town Centre baskets/planters – planting/installing/waterin g/removing		Support other officers in managing projects to deliver their objectives	Mayor’s diary
Processing contractual payments for services received					Archive
Invoicing for services delivered – debt management.					Room bookings (making and receiving)
					Noticeboards

<p>Management of grants scheme</p> <p>Development/management of SLAs both in terms of us paying for services and us being paid for services</p> <p>Insurance</p> <p>Risk management</p> <p>Legal processes</p> <p>IT lead – kit/website/network arrangements etc</p> <p>Utilities and services - regular review</p> <p>VAT</p> <p>Planning</p> <p>Committee meetings relevant to role</p>	<p>Health and Safety for the Council</p> <p>Support the maintenance of Asset Register</p> <p>Emergency Planning</p> <p>Organisation of Town Council events</p> <p>Committee meetings relevant to role</p>	<p>Developing specifications for contracting services and for delivering services</p> <p>Delivering grounds services to other parish councils</p> <p>Wellington Park Green Flag/Britain in Bloom</p> <p>Cemetery Management</p> <p>Verge maintenance</p> <p>Delivery and continued development of Climate Change Strategy/Tree Strategy</p> <p>Committee meetings relevant to role</p>	<p>Youth provision – development of spec/commissioning of services/monitoring service delivery</p> <p>Managing Parent Family Support Advisor or similar function (if needed)</p> <p>Needs analysis/development of projects to meet needs</p> <p>Community Engagement</p> <p>Developing community resilience</p> <p>Identifying funding opportunities for activities</p> <p>Support assessment of relevant grant applications</p> <p>Council Safeguarding lead</p>	<p>Promotion of Wellington</p> <p>Toneworks tours/promotion ??</p>	<p>Receive payments for allotments/stalls</p>
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