

Minutes of the meeting of the POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE held in the Anzac Room, Community House, Meridian Centre, Peacehaven on Tuesday 10th December 2019 at 6.30pm

Present - Cllr C Collier (Chair of Committee), Cllr C Cheta, Cllr J Harris, Cllr A Goble, Cllr S Griffiths, Cllr A Seabrook, Cllr I Sharkey, Cllr A Milliner, Cllr C Gallagher.
Town Clerk T Allen, Finance Officer A Beams, Finance Administrator Z Malone.

PF445 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and read out the safety and housekeeping notices.

PF446 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No members of the public were present.

PF447 TO CONSIDER APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr L Duhigg (Vice-Chair of Committee).

[Clerks Note: Apologies for absence were subsequently received from Cllr I Sharkey].

PF448 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

There were no declarations of interests.

PF449 TO ADOPT THE MINUTES OF 19th NOVEMBER 2019

It was resolved to adopt the minutes as a true record.

PF450 TO APPROVE THE MIGRATION TO 'ELECTRONIC' BANKING

It was resolved that on-line banking should be set up.

PF451 COUNCIL'S & COMMITTEES' BUDGETARY REQUIREMENTS FOR 2020/21 – PASS 2

The draft budget papers and figures produced by the Finance Officer were noted and discussed in detail.

It was noted that the budget for the current year was on-track and that it is anticipated that there will be no overspend at the end of the financial year; possibly a small underspend.

The need to bolster the Council's general reserves was discussed, in order to raise them to an acceptable level.

It was noted that the Tax Base figure is still awaited from LDC and that an estimated figure (4989.9) has been used for the draft budget. Also, it has been assumed that there will be no Council Tax Support Grant contribution from LDC; confirmation from LDC is also awaited. It was also noted that the Government will not be capping the precept increase levels for Town & Parish Councils for 2020/21.

The impact of the draft budget on the precept requirement was discussed along with various options for trimming the budget if required. The impact on the Council's operations and retained reserves from reducing the draft budget was noted. Whist in percentage terms the draft budget represented an increase of 17.1% in the precept requirement, in monetary terms this would result in an additional c. £1.50 per month for Band D properties.

It was agreed that Council would have to agree any cuts in the draft budget and justify this in relation to the impact on services to residents. Conversely, Council would have to justify higher levels of precept in relation to what it intends to deliver.

The draft salaries budget was discussed and it was noted that full salary reviews should be carried out in the next financial year, with pay increases (in addition to cost of living increases) due for most staff. It was noted that the draft salaries budget included provision for recruiting a Business Development Officer from the start of the new financial year. The option to defer this appointment for six months/twelve months could be a consideration for reducing the draft salaries budget.

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It was noted that the use of CIL monies when possible would supplement some of the budget funding. Cllr Gallagher to check whether this can extend to recruiting a Business Development Officer. The Chairman stated that this proposed new role needed to be properly defined for approval by Council at its next meeting. Cllr Griffiths, Cllr Seabrook and Cllr Gallagher to produce this specification.

It was resolved to recommend to Council that the 2020/21 budget, as drafted, be adopted with two alternatives also to be presented; one with the provision in the draft salaries budget for the Business Development Officer removed; the other with the provision in the draft salaries budget for the Business Development Officer to commence in Month 7 2020/21.

PF452 DATE OF NEXT MEETING – TUESDAY 18th February 2020 at 7.30pm.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 19:27