

CHICHESTER CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

HELD ON TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2013 AT 5.30PM

- PRESENT : Councillors Bell, Campling, T Dignum, French, Plowman and Rankin
- EX OFFICIO : The Mayor (Councillor Chaplin)
Deputy Mayor (Councillor Hughes)
Councillors Siggs and Woolley
- APOLOGIES : Councillor Scicluna
- IN ATTENDANCE : Town Clerk, Finance Manager, Property Manager and Administration Manager

54 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 22 October 2013 having been circulated, were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

55 NEW HOMES BONUS

The Chairman advised that Chichester District Council had approved five out of the six New Homes Bonus Applications that had been submitted by Chichester City Council on behalf of various local organisations; the projects were as follows :

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| - Regnum Guide Hall | £20,000 |
| - New Park Centre | £35,000 |
| - Modular Building at Graylingwell | £25,000 |
| - South Downs Planetarium | £25,000 |
| - Chichester Runners | £30,000 (with conditions attached) |

The process that Chichester City Council had followed in preparing the New Homes Bonus Applications had been commended by Chichester District Council.

The successful New Homes Bonus projects would be monitored by the City Council's Finance Manager and Property Manager before any monies are distributed. The money had to be spent within 3 years of its allocation.

Councillor T Dignum, speaking as a Chichester District Council member, advised that nineteen parishes in the Chichester district had applied for the New Homes Bonus and that the scheme would be run again as any unspent money would be allocated to the £400,000 budget that had been allocated for the scheme over the next four years.

All future applicants for the New Homes Bonus would have a longer time period, ie. 3 months, to prepare their applications.

56 BUDGET 2014/2015

An updated report of the Town Clerk and Finance Manager had been circulated to all members with the Agenda; the report stated a 1.46% increase in the Precept.

The Chairman explained that a strategic approach had been used in preparing the 2014/2015 Budget with the main objective being to invest in the City Council's assets particularly the Council House, for example the redecoration of the Assembly Room.

The Finance Manager advised that the Council Tax Base information had now been received and that following a recent Pensions Meeting it had been confirmed that the pensions increase would be 3.6% over 3 years and that the proposed City Council budget giving a 1.46% increase on the Precept included a 4% increase and therefore the full amount would remain in the 2014/2015 budget.

Following the last Finance Committee Meeting the following amendments had been included in the 2014/2015 Budget :

- An income budget of £5,000 had been set up for Chichester in Bloom
- A budget of £2,500 had been allocated for Buttermarket Professional Fees as there was already an existing Earmarked Reserve of £14,935
- The budget for the Painting Conservation project had been removed as there was currently a budget of £12,285 in the current financial year which was likely to be underspent and therefore a significant amount could be carried forward to the 2014/2015 financial year.
- The Council Tax Offset Grant would be reduced to £7,835.
- The Staff Professional Fees budget would be reduced to £1,400.
- A budget of £500 had been included for the maintenance of one brick built bus shelter. Chichester District Council had advised that any maintenance costs incurred for the bus shelters in the City were included within the Adshel contract.
- A budget of £44,000 has been included in the budget for the redecoration of the Assembly Room.
- A budget of £5,000 has been included in the budget for repair works to the Cross Clock.
- The posts of Property Manager and the Property Manager's Assistant (15hrs a week) are included in the budget following the recommendation of the Personnel Sub-Committee.

The Finance Manager had been asked to investigate the Local Authority Property Fund as the Fund was designed to achieve long term capital growth. However a long term investment of 5 years would be required to achieve an income yield of 6%. There were high penalty costs involved if the investment was settled early.

The Finance Manager reminded the Committee that the Investment Policy adopted by the City Council on 19 March 2013 stated that monies should not be invested for a term exceeding 12 months.

The Committee agreed that the Local Authority Property Fund should continue to be evaluated.

The City Council was currently in the process of reviewing its insurance contract, and early indications were showing a potential saving in excess of £2,000 on a 3-year contract.

It was therefore RECOMMENDED to full Council that the City Council's Budget for 2014/2015 be increased by 2.48% a sum of £11,808 resulting in a Precept Demand of £488,110 and a Band D Council Tax Payment of £48.09. After taking the tax base (10,150.8) into account this is an increase of 1.46%

57 SECTION 106 FUNDING

The Chairman advised that following a presentation by Dan Sanders of West Sussex County Council at the Community Affairs Committee meeting held in October, it was apparent that Section 106 money was available to parish councils and that Chichester City Council should consider submitting projects that Section 106 money could fund.

At the recent Planning & Conservation Committee Meeting (Minute 88 refers) a presentation and discussion had taken place on the possibility of siting a sculpture of the poet John Keats in the Eastgate Square area of the City Centre and it was suggested that this could be funded from Section 106 money from the County Council.

The Chairman said that there were many other projects that could improve the streetscape of the City Centre and that Section 106 money could help fund these projects. The Chairman had initially proposed a sum of £50,000 for public artwork in the City be applied for from West Sussex County Council, however the Committee felt that it would be beneficial if the Town Clerk could ascertain the criteria connected with Section 106 money in the first instance before applying for a specific sum of money. The Committee also discussed that a survey should be undertaken on what improvements the City Council may like to see in the City Centre, eg. improved signage, cycle racks, etc.

It was therefore RESOLVED that the Town Clerk contact West Sussex County Council requesting the criteria and the procedures involved with applying for Section 106 money and that a survey be undertaken by the Property Manager, in conjunction with members, on projects that may enhance the streetscape of the City Centre.

58 PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS ACT) 1960

It was RESOLVED that the public and press be excluded from this meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted namely personnel matters.

59 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES/WORKING GROUPS

(a) Personnel Sub-Committee

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2013 having been circulated be approved.

60 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 21 January 2014

The meeting closed at 6.30pm