

CHICHESTER CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

HELD ON TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2015 AT 5.30PM

- PRESENT : Councillors Bell, Dignum, M Evans, T French, Keyworth and Scicluna
- EX OFFICIO : The Mayor (Councillor P Budge)
Deputy Mayor (Councillor Tupper)
Councillor P Evans
- APOLOGIES : Councillor Kilby
- ALSO PRESENT : Councillors Apel, Galloway, Plowman and Sharp
- IN ATTENDANCE : Town Clerk, Finance Manager and Administration Manager

43 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 11 August 2015 having been circulated, were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

44 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO 31 AUGUST 2015

A copy of the Revenue Budget Monitoring Report to 31 August 2015 was circulated with the Agenda.

The Report showed a surplus of £35,007 against the budget to the end of August 2015.

The Finance Manager spoke on the Variances listed in the Budget Monitoring Report which were now cumulative from the start of the financial year 2015/2016.

45 CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT 2015/2016

A copy of the Capital Monitoring Report 2015/2016 was circulated with the Agenda.

The Finance Manager advised there had been no Capital expenditure so far this financial year.

The Finance Manager was recommending to the Committee that the allocation of £10,000 for the Whyke Community Centre be returned to General Reserves.

It was RESOLVED that the £10,000 Capital Expenditure allocated for the Whyke Community Centre be returned to General Reserves.

46 DRAFT BUDGET 2016/2017

A draft copy of the Budget Report 2016/2017 had been circulated to all members. The Finance Manager explained that the draft budget indicated a 2.73% increase in the Precept, however an increase in the tax base, and using last year's tax base as a guide, the draft budget gave an overall 0% increase. The District Council would be passing on the Council Tax Grant figure so the reference to it possibly not being passed on (Page 1 of the report) should be deleted.

The Finance Manager went through the draft Budget Report and members discussed the items.

The suggestion that the Discretionary Grant budget be reduced by £20,000 to assist with City wide maintenance and improvement projects were discussed by members. Some members felt that the Discretionary Grant budget of £50,000 should remain and as this was an important lifeline for many local organisations.

It was agreed that the Discretionary Budget would remain at £50,000 but upto £20,000 could be used for public realm projects upon application by the City Council itself.

It was agreed that Capital Schemes for consideration should include an item for a vehicle for the Property Maintenance Officer and other officers to use, preferably electric, and could be a van or cargo trike, whichever was deemed suitable by Officers for the Council's requirements.

47 REVIEW OF INVESTMENTS

The Finance Manager's report had been circulated to all members with the Agenda.

The Finance Manager said that CCLA Investment Management Ltd had given members a presentation on the Local Authority Property Fund and although the return on investments over 5 to 8 years was good, the Finance Manager felt that this type of investment would not be suitable for the City Council. The Committee noted that the City Council's accountancy advisors, DCK Beavers, had advised it was unwise to tie-up resources beyond 12 months.

Councillor French proposed that £100,000 should be invested in the Local Authority Property Fund; however this proposal was not seconded.

It was RESOLVED that it would not be sensible at this time to tie-up the City Council's capital funds in long-term investments, particularly taking into account future works that may be required to both the Council House and the Market Cross.

48 INTERNAL CONTROL POLICY

The Finance Manager explained that approval of the Internal Control Policy was part of the External Audit and that the Policy showed that the City Council were following the guidelines required for the safeguarding of public money.

It was RESOLVED that the Internal Control Policy be adopted and signed accordingly.

49 CHICHESTER CITY BAND

The Mayor had requested that consideration be given to the City Council becoming a Gold Level Sponsor of the Chichester City Band at a cost of £300 per annum.

Councillor Keyworth declared a Prejudicial Interest in this matter as a Patron of the City Band and took no part in the meeting or voting.

Concerns were raised that such a sponsorship would set a precedent bearing in mind that the Council had many years ago decided not to award 'annual grants' although it was noted that the City Band were one of only two organisations that are permitted to use the City Council's Coat of Arms and that the Mayor was President of the City Band by default. It was also mentioned that the City Band had in the past applied for Discretionary Grants and the question was asked if this sponsorship would preclude them from applying for a grant.

It was RECOMMENDED to Full Council that the City Council become a Chichester City Band Gold Level Sponsor at a cost of £300 per annum (reviewed each year in the budget process) and that this was an exceptional case and that this would not prejudice the City Band from applying for future Discretionary Grants.

50 BUDGET SAVING REQUEST

The Mayor had requested that consideration be given to all meetings of the Council, Committee, etc, move from an evening time, ie. post 5.30pm to day time and be held between 9.00am and 5.00pm as a cost saving measure.

The Town Clerk advised that the staff costs involved with evening meetings (these costs excluded the Town Clerk, Administration Manager, Finance Manager and Property Manager who did not claim overtime due to the grading) was £1,000 of the scheduled Council and Committee meetings, 20% happened when other hirers were in the building and the cost recharge could be split.

Councillor Sharp asked if the City Council had an Equalities and Diversity Policy and was informed that such a policy did exist and had just been rewritten by the Town Clerk and would be circulated. She had raised the point that daytime meetings excluded people from attending.

Members discussed the advantages and disadvantages of changing the time of the meetings and it was RESOLVED that the timing of meetings would remain as they are.

51 NEW HOMES BONUS 2015/2016

It was RESOLVED that the Conditions in the Agreement relating to New Homes Bonus (Parish Allocations) 2015/2016 between Chichester District Council and Chichester City Council be accepted and that the Town Clerk be authorised to sign the Agreement on the City Council's behalf.

52 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2016 AND BEYOND

The report of the Town Clerk had been circulated to all members with the Agenda which outlined how the City Council's Annual Parish Meeting could be revitalised. It was important that an overview by Committee Chairmen on the previous year's work should be still included but invite guest speakers to do presentations on community matters. Members were asked to forward any ideas to the Town Clerk and these would be reported at the next Finance Committee.

53 ALL SAINTS CHURCHYARD, PORTFIELD

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that a formal notice from the Parochial Parish Council of St George's Whyke had been received requesting Chichester City Council take over the maintenance of the Churchyard under Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972. The final Order in Council had been made thus making this a Closed Churchyard. The City Council had 3 months to serve a counter-notice.

It was RESOLVED that the City Council would serve a counter notice on Chichester District Council under Section 215(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 and enter into discussions about future maintenance of the site as part of the Cemetery Memorandum of Understanding between that existed between the two councils. Contact would also be made with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to confirm the arrangements, once finalised, about a programme for maintenance of the War Graves in the Churchyard.

54 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

(a) Personnel Sub-Committee

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 14 October 2015 having been previously circulated, were approved and adopted excluding the Recommendations in Minutes 9 and 10 which were considered separately.

Minute 9 Staff Structure Review

It was recommended to the Finance Committee that the recommendations contained within the Staff Structure Review be approved.

It was RESOLVED :

1. that the Council support the staffing and grading structure proposals in this report which, other than a Year One cost of £8,868.92 to reflect the backdating proposed by the Sub-Committee. This is partly offset by fortuitous additional savings from the vacant post of the former Property Manager's Assistant and a period of unpaid leave taken by the Property Manager totalling in the region of £5,000. The staffing and grading structure proposals will show savings in future years;
2. that a Flexible Retirement request from the Town Clerk to reduce from 5 working days to 4 working days a week with effect from 31 March 2016 be supported as there are no pension scheme strain cost to be met by the City Council;
3. that the Town Clerk must be permitted to devote a greater proportion of his time to higher level issues (identified through the appraisal process, which will then cascade through Line Managers again, through the appraisal process) and that a policy of maximum effective delegation to Line Managers be supported;
4. that the current arrangements for the Administration Manager (as the only full time management post) to deputise for the Town Clerk in his absence continue unchanged;
5. that Kim Martin, Finance Manager, assume the role of Responsible Financial Officer (from the Town Clerk) no later than 1 January 2016;
6. that, following the retirement of the post holder on 8 September 2015, the post of Property Manager's Assistant be disestablished and a 'City Council Property Ranger' post created Further, that the relationship between this new post and the role of the Custodians be also examined, including redrafting job descriptions for the Custodian and a change in job title;
7. that line management for the Custodians and Front of House Supervisor transfer to the Property Manager from the Administration Manager on 1 January 2016. Further, it be accepted that 'Property' is the most likely area of growth for this Council and will underpin a stated requirement of the City Council for the maintenance, preservation and enhancement of Council assets;
8. that the role, responsibilities and grading of the Mayor's Secretary/Administrative Assistant post be given further consideration following discussions with the post holder upon return from sick leave;
9. that costs and cover arrangements to process planning applications in the absence of the Planning Adviser be investigated;
10. that maximum use be made of the City Council website, social media and press releases to promote the work and achievements of the City Council and that the Administration Manager leads on this task;
11. that through a regular process of staff meetings, the Town Clerk and senior managers bring forward new policies initiatives for the Council to improve and enhance the way business is done, with the stated budgetary policy of the Council uppermost;
12. that the Town Clerk ensures that all staff keep their job descriptions up to date;

13. that it be recognised that professional development training for both Councillors and officers underpins a process of continuous improvement.

It was further RESOLVED that recruitment for the Property Maintenance Officer commence immediately.

It was recommended to the Finance Committee that staff salary increments as detailed in the Staff Structure Report be implemented and backdated for 12 months, ie. to 1 April 2015 noting the interim grading proposal for the Property Maintenance Officer .

It was therefore RESOLVED that staff salary increments as detailed in the Staff Structure Report be implemented and backdated for 12 months, ie. to 1 April 2015 noting the interim grading proposal for the Property Maintenance Officer .

Minute 10 Sickness & Absence Management Policy

It was Recommended to the Finance Committee that the Sickness & Absence Management Policy be adopted.

It was RESOLVED that the Sickness & Absence Management Policy be adopted.

(b) Property Sub-Committee

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Property Sub-Committee held on 12 October 2015 having been previously circulated, were approved and adopted

55 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(a) List of Cheques paid for July and August 2015

RESOLVED to note the cheques paid for July and August 2015

(b) List of Barclaycard Payments for July and August 2015

RESOLVED to note the Barclaycard payments for July and August 2015.

(c) Finance Round Up

The Finance Manager advised that the Annual Return 2014/2015 had been signed off by the Auditors, PKF Littlejohn and that they advised that an amendment on the form by the Finance Manager be countersigned by the Town Clerk and Chairman.

56 ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE AGENDA FOR THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING

- Budget 2016/2017
- Annual Parish Meeting
- All Saints Churchyard, Portfield

57 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 24 November 2015

The meeting closed at 6.55pm