



NANTWICH TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 28th January 2021

Present – Councillors: David Marren (Chair), Arthur Moran, Stuart Bostock, David Greaves, John Statham and Stephanie Wedgwood with the Facilities Manager David Thomas and Samantha Roberts the Town Clerk.

Also present: Councillors Pam Kirkham, Peter Groves and Andrew Martin

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Phil Staley

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest expressed.

22. MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE OF 26th November 2020

Committee approved the minutes of the Meeting held on 26th November 2020.

23. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Members considered the previous circulated report detailing the income and expenditure to 31 December 2020. The Clerk advised members that she had followed the same format of reporting as previous months highlighting where savings had been made and how this has off-set the reduction in income experienced due to the pandemic.

The Clerk advised members that she had received a question relating to the purchase of the Cherry Picker referred to in the report. The Clerk reminded members that the vehicle had been purchased through capital reserves and so would not impact on the general reserves and precept setting. The capital funds had been transferred from capital investment into the general revenue account last year in anticipation for delivery and payment of the vehicle.

Resolved: It was resolved:

- a) To note the report and approve the review of income and expenditure and the bank reconciliations as of 31 December 2020;
- b) Continue to act with caution and refrain from unnecessary expenditure.

24. BUDGET/PRECEPT COMPARISONS – CONSIDERATION OF RESIDENT CORRESPONDENCE

Members considered the previously circulated report detailing comparison with six neighbouring town and parish councils. The Clerk highlighted the main areas of the report relating to differing council tax bases, general reserve and ear marked reserve levels and financial management of Civic and Town halls. The research had identified that all councils with Civic and Town Hall were faced with assets where expenditure exceeded income each year. The Clerk informed members that Monday through to Thursday the Civic Hall was used predominantly for community focused use. The Facilities Manager provided examples of the typical bookings at the Civic Hall during the week. The Facilities Manager advised that the main income was generated over weekends.

Both the Chair and Councillor Moran confirmed that when the town council took over the Civic Hall part of the agreement was to ensure the building remained a community facility.

Councillor Martin confirmed that the working group on the boundary review had completed its work and it is hoped that the findings and recommendations of the working group should be released and consulted upon very soon.

Following a question from Councillor Statham relating to the Civic Hall the Clerk offered to provide members with historic details of the budgets set each year together with the actual year end figures for the Civic Hall. In addition, the Chair requested that information relating to the agreement between the town council and Cheshire East when the Civic Hall was transferred in 2012 be provided to members.

In supporting the recommendation relating to double taxation the Chair highlighted that Congleton Town Council was in receipt of over £300k per year from Cheshire East following the transfer of service delivery for Streetscape to the town council.

In supporting the recommendations of the report Councillor Statham suggested additional actions for future budget setting processes. Councillor Statham suggested introducing forward planning budgets with the council considering draft budgets for future years and not just the coming year. He also suggested an evolving budget where the following years budget is developed throughout the year beginning with the current budget as a base line. Councillor Statham also supported the idea from a resident for a working group.

In responding to Councillor Statham's suggestion, the Clerk advised that it would be very possible to introduce forward planning budgets and evolving budgets. The Clerk added that the introduction of workshops for members during the development of the detailed budget could be introduced between July and October, with workshops considering individual cost centres breaking the budget down into smaller manageable sections before the Finance Committee and subsequent Full Council considered the full draft budget.

Resolved: It was resolved that:

- a) The Town Council will continue to respond to all future consultations relating to the boundary review in an attempt to increase the council tax base;
- b) The Town Council will seek to engage with Cheshire East to address the issues of double taxation following the transfer of assets or services from Cheshire East to Town or Parish level;
- c) The Town Council will consider how income can be increased further through activities at the Civic Hall.
- d) The Town Council will consult with residents on draft budget proposals during October/November each year before a final decision is made, improving communication and transparency further.
- e) The Town Council will publish an annual report detailing the activities of the town council in the preceding year helping residents to understand the services the council delivers.
- f) The Town Council will introduce forward planning budgets and evolving budget processes;
- g) The Town Council will introduce member budget workshops between July and October.

25. ACCOUNTS AND PAYMENTS

Resolved: That the schedule of payments be approved in accordance with the previous resolution of the Town Council to use the General Power of Competence, the total sums as follows:

Trading Account = £173,409.17
Current Account = £3,995.96
Petty cash = £2.65
One card = £2,516.66

The meeting ended at 7.25pm

Signature of Chair :.....

Date :.....