

Draft Minutes of Finance Committee (held remotely) on 29th November 2021 @ 6pm

In attendance: Councillors M. Harriman, M.J. Edwards (Chair), J. Holmes, K. Hobbley, J. Hobbley, J. Jones.

Chair: Councillor M.J. Edwards

Mrs Camilla Povey, Clerk taking up post in December, observing only

Apologies: Councillors A. Merry, M. Wilde, Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer S Baxter

There were no members of the press and public present for the meeting.

1. **Apologies:** Apologies were given and accepted.
2. Declarations of interest: Cllr Jones declared an interest in respect of Item 6, the budget, in relation to Gresford Community Library. Cllr Holmes declared an interest in respect of Item 13, Renewal of Lease, Allington Park.
3. **Minutes of Finance Committee meeting held 21st September 2021 and matters arising:** Cllr Edwards proposed the Minutes as an accurate record and this was AGREED. There were no matters arising.
4. **Consideration of Statement of Reserves Policy and agree any changes:** The draft document was examined, and discussion took place about various items. Figures were agreed as follows – numbers in brackets show 2021-22 position):

Earmarked

- Precept offset: £15,100k (£14k)
- Lighting column maintenance/replacement programme: £25k (£25k)
- Cemetery development: £25k (£25k)
- Play area maintenance/development: £41k (£41k)
- Environmental improvements/storm damage/climate: £5k (£5k)
- Allotments – purchase of land and legal costs arising from this: (32k (£32k)
- Election costs: £4k (£4k)
- Footpath Allington Park £5k (£0)

General (un-earmarked)

- Contingency reserve: c £18k (£18,024)

The proposed sum for reserves is, therefore, £171k The Reserves Policy was AGREED for recommendation to full Council subject to amendments these amendments being made.

5. **Draft Risk Assessment document 2022-23:** Some amendments identified; the names of banks in the Finance section need to be updated and all items must show a risk rating of some sort (cyber security agreed as requiring LOW rating given new arrangements for website and eMails). Subject to the Clerk making these small amendments, the document was AGREED for recommendation to full Council.
6. **Precept and Budget for 2022-2023:** The Chair took members through the sheets prepared by the Clerk as draft budget and other information. The tax base for 2022-23 has been estimated as 2,670 for the purpose of constructing this budget.

Issues raised/matters to be aware of:

- **Street Lighting:** there is a need to allow sufficient funds to guard against potential large rises in energy costs, going forward.

- **Personel:** issues relating to whether Welsh Government intends to continue to fund the Community Agent Scheme, salary uplift and moral imperative to an hourly rate equivalent to the living wage. The Community Agent is funded by Welsh Govt; GCC acts merely as an agent in passing this money on. AGREED to recommend that the Clerk should write urgently to both WCBC and Lesley Griffiths AM to seek clarification on these points.
- **Administration:** additional funding required in respect of elections in 2022.
- **Grants:** proposed to reduce the amount allocated for grants in line with spend in 2021-22.

Following these discussions, the final budget to be recommended was AGREED as follows:

- £108,600 for 2022-2023 (£104,800 in 2021-22);
- a precept of £95,000;
- a contribution from balances of £15,100 or sufficient to keep the rise in precept as low as possible. This may be adjusted when the final Tax Base figure is known.

7. External Audit Report: Nothing raised. Carry over to next meeting agenda.

8. Update on allotments – land purchase and solicitor acting: No papers provided. Carry over to next meeting agenda.

9. Document Retention Policy: This was discussed. AGREED to take this policy forward to full Council with the recommendation that it be adopted.

9i Topworld document archiving quotation: Not received; carry over to next agenda.

10 Draft Disciplinary and Grievance Policy: Staffing Sub-Committee recommends that all outstanding draft policies, apart from the Probation Policy (see Item 11), be held until such time as the new Clerk can review these and bring them forward in a staged manner - all such policies to have been brought forward for approval after six months in post. AGREED that this recommendation be put to full Council. Cllr Jones will produce a summary of policies involved.

11. Draft Probation Policy: There were no suggested amendments to this policy. Therefore, it was AGREED to take this policy forward to full Council with the recommendation that it be adopted.

PART TWO CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

12. Staffing

13. Allington Park

14. Date of next meeting. The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be **24th January 2022 at 6pm**. This meeting is likely to be held remotely.

Meeting closed at 20.20