



Witham

town council

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MINUTES

Meeting of: **Estimates Sub-Committee**

Date: **Tuesday 17th December 2024**

Present: Councillors P. Barlow (Chairman)
L. Barlow
B. Fleet
P. Heath

Also in attendance: Councillor J.C. Coleman
N. Smith (Town Clerk)
H. Andrews (Deputy Town Clerk)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Adelaja and Martin.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received approved.

2. **INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

There was no member of the press or public present.

4. **COMMITTEE BUDGETS**

(a) Summary Sheet

The proposed summary sheet showing each Committee budget line was noted by Members who agreed to discuss each in turn.

(b) Admin & Central Services

The recommended Administration and Central Services Budget for 2025/2026 was received. It was noted that income received from hall hire had increased in recent years, maximising revenue at the Town Hall, and will continue to increase with regular bookings. It was noted that many of the budget lines attracted no increases for next year demonstrating that the Council would absorb any inflation related costs in the period with some modest reductions in 2 budget lines."

Some increases had been included for gas and electricity rises, and the legal budget line had been increased to take into account expected legal fees relating to the Maltings Lane Community Centre transfer. The Clerk noted that the fuel increases had been difficult to estimate as both would be effectively new contracts and suppliers were not readily engaging at this stage.

RECOMMENDED TO TOWN COUNCIL That the attached budget for Admin & Central Services for 2025/2026 be accepted.

(c) Community Committee

The recommended Community Committee Budget for 2025/2026 was received.

Members discussed how successful the Town Council events are and noted that it has been recommended that an Arts Council grant application be made for further income towards the Street Entertainment festival.

It was noted that the events budget lines were not strictly like-for-like comparisons although the overall costs were broadly comparable year on year. It was suggested that the VE and VJ budget lines be separated from the Music event to enable discussions between RBL and RAFA to provide input. If Full Town Council approved the overall budget the Community Committee would ultimately resolve how the budgets would be allocated.

RESOLVED That adjustments be made to include the VE and VJ events as separate budget lines with the Music event as a stand-alone.

RECOMMENDED TO TOWN COUNCIL That the attached amended budget for the Community Committee for 2025/2026 be accepted.

(d) Environment Committee

The recommended Environment Committee Budget for 2025/2026 was received.

It was noted that the most significant increase was for the lighting and maintenance budget line as a new contract is required for unmetered electrical supply of council streetlights which also incorporates CCTV cameras. It was suggested that solar powering the streetlights could be explored and exploring grants to fund these.

Members discussed that most budget lines had remained the same and had not increased with inflation.

RECOMMENDED TO TOWN COUNCIL That the attached budget for the Environment Committee for 2025/2026 be accepted.

(e) Policy & Resources Committee

The recommended Policy and Resources Committee Budget for 2025/2026 was received.

It was noted that the budget line for interest received had remained the same. Although interest received from the CCLA and Unity savings account had increased during 2024/25, interest rates are predicted to be cut in the next financial year. Two budget line increases were proposed for surveys and newsletter as described in the report.

RECOMMENDED TO TOWN COUNCIL That the attached budget for the Policy and Resources Committee for 2025/2026 be accepted.

(f) Planning & Transport Committee

The recommended Planning and Transport Committee Budget for 2025/2026 was received.

The speed reduction budget line has been greatly reduced due to Essex Police purchasing the Tru Cam device that had previously been budgeted for. It was highlighted this was a genuine substantial saving with no assessed adverse effect.

RECOMMENDED TO TOWN COUNCIL That the attached budget for the Planning and Transport Committee for 2025/2026 be accepted.

(g) Maltings Lane

A new budget line was included for the Maltings Lane Community Centre, as completion is forecast by the District Council to January 2026. Therefore, three months' income and expenditures have been estimated based on the best available data.

RECOMMENDED TO TOWN COUNCIL That the attached budget for Maltings Lane for 2025/2026 be accepted.

5. **RESERVE BALANCES**

The proposed Earmarked Reserves for 2025/2026 were received.

Members discussed the River Walk Cycleways reserve and agreed it could be reduced to £25,000, as Section 106 funding would be available.

It was noted that the increase to the Town Hall Development reserve line was for the improvements required to the Open Spaces team's accommodation. The Acquisitions/Maltings Lane EMR had been adjusted as it was expected that there would be increased legal costs payable this financial year.

The Town Clerk advised that the Charter Market control account had been increased as negotiations were still taking place with the leaseholder. It was also noted that the Highways Devolution reserve was likely to be used on replacement bus shelters near the railway station and anticipated costs for this were awaited.

RESOLVED That the River Walk Cycleways reserve be adjusted to £25,000 and Acquisitions/Maltings Lane to be adjusted to £50,000.

RECOMMENDED TO TOWN COUNCIL That the attached reserve balances for 2025/2026 be accepted.

6. PRECEPT

The Precept Calculations based on the discussed budgets for 2025/2026 were received.

Members considered that they were satisfied with the proposed increase of £8.45 on a Band D property and agreed to recommend the proposed budget for 2025/2026 to the Full Town Council. This equates to a 16p/week increase on Band D to a total of £2.15/week

RECOMMENDATION TO TOWN COUNCIL That the Precept for 2025/2026 of £1,041,265.74 be approved with a net increase in the Band D Property of £8.45 to £111.69.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.43pm

Councillor Phil Barlow
Chairman

HA/NS/18.12.2024