

UNADOPTED
**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MALVERN TOWN COUNCIL**

**held in the Council Chamber, Belle Vue Terrace, Malvern
on Wednesday 8 December 2021 at 6.00 pm**

Councillors

C Hooper (Chairman)
J Satterthwaite (Vice Chairman)
N Mills
R McLaverty-Head
P Tuthill

In attendance

Linda Blake - Town Clerk
Louise Wall - Minute Clerk
Cllr N Houghton - Mayor
Kate Walton, Community Action

Absent

J Ashington-Carter (apologies)
L Lowton (apologies)
A Stitt (apologies)
J O'Donnell

29. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the following councillors were **NOTED**:

- J Ashington-Carter
- L Lowton
- A Stitt

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

31. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the following meeting be approved and adopted as a correct record of the proceedings, to be signed by the Chairman:

- Policy and Resources Committee meeting 4 November 2021.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

32. MALVERN TOWN COMMUNITY SUPPORT GRANT 2022/23 – COMMUNITY ACTION AND DISTRICT

Report PR01/21 was received and accepted and the Chairman introduced Kate Walton, Chief Officer at Community Action, who had attended the meeting to speak in support of the Community Support grant application and to answer any questions from members of the committee.

The Town Council has provided Community Action with an annual grant, historically set to equal the level of rent chargeable for their offices, with both the rental income and grant awarded being shown in the Town Council's accounts.

Kate explained that she had joined Community Action in August this year, having worked in a similar capacity in Pershore and was enjoying getting to know

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Malvern. She told members that during the Covid pandemic, Community Action staff were equipped to work from home so that they could continue providing support to residents, keeping in touch by telephone. Because Community Action's volunteers tend to be of retirement age, many of them were also required to self-isolate; extra drivers were recruited from WCC's Here2Help scheme and people who were furloughed from their usual jobs also volunteered.

Community Action have found that since restrictions have eased, there has been increased interest from people wishing to go out on trips in the minibus, but numbers have to be limited to ensure social distancing. There has been a marked drop in the number of trips to medical appointments.

Malvern Town Council had awarded an emergency grant of £10,000 to Community Action in April 2020 and members asked how this had been used. Kate Walton said that she did not have the specific information to hand but that the grant had been allocated against a general deficit caused by a drop in income..

Members asked for a breakdown of expenditure for the emergency grant to be provided, if possible before the Full Council meeting later in December.

Members discussed the effects on the Community Support grant given that the Town Council had decided to sell the building at Belle Vue Terrace and a sale might proceed and/or Community Action may terminate their lease. Members suggested that rather than paying the grant twice yearly as in previous years, it should be paid monthly to allow greater flexibility should the current situation change.

It was **AGREED** to amend the recommendation to take into consideration the uncertainty surrounding the building and occupancy.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Community Action be awarded a Malvern Town Community Support grant of £10,900 for the year 2022/23 and that it be included in the 2022/23 annual budget. However, the grant would be paid in monthly instalments until either the building was sold or Community Action chose to terminate their lease.

33. **EMERGENCY GRANT APPLICATION – MALVERN HILLS FOOD BANK**

Report PR02/21 was received and accepted.

The Town Clerk explained that the Food Bank had applied for an emergency grant rather than the usual grants scheme on account of timing, but that committee members needed to consider the merits, benefits and nature of the stated emergency to determine whether the grant should be awarded or not.

Members discussed the details within the application form. They felt that as the monies would be spent between now and Easter 2022, it could not be classed as an emergency requirement. Furthermore, the Food Bank has approximately £65,000 in reserves and therefore £1,000 would make little difference.

It was **AGREED** that the application for a grant of £1,000 be referred to Full Council for consideration with a request for further information regarding the levels of reserves and the nature of the emergency.

34. BUDGET 2022/23

Report PR03/21 was received and accepted. The Town Clerk explained that producing the budget had again been difficult, because of the many variables that had needed to be factored in and with recent Town Council resolutions causing uncertainty in the timing of expenditure and income.

Members of the Budget Working Party had expressed a wish to keep the precept between 1% and 2%, but this had not been possible because it had been necessary to include various assumptions regarding the sale of Belle Vue Terrace and the new building at Victoria Park, the associated financing of the project, as well as recommendations from the Budget Working Party, Operations and Planning Committee and Council resolutions throughout the year. The first draft of the budget included an increase in the precept of 2.73%.

The re-forecast for 2021/22 had resulted in a small underspend being put into reserves.

The tax base was not known at the time of the meeting, but it was anticipated that a figure would be known ahead of Full Council.

Members acknowledged that it was once again a very sound preparation of the budget and raised the following points:

- *Expenses associated with the project to build a new building at Victoria Park are not in the budget* – the budget of £1.5 million for the new building includes demolition, build, planning, surveys and other associated costs.
- *Only a small amount of income from basketball courts has been included* – this is because the facility must be mainly free to use as a condition of the Section 106 funding.
- Three months of income from the areas currently leased at Belle Vue had been included in the budget. In addition, a prudent sum had been included for the last three months of the financial year to cover income from the meeting room and café at Victoria Park.

Some members were concerned that the budget had relied on assumptions and speculative figures and that costs may increase in the future. However, the Town Clerk said that with such a large number of variable factors affecting both income and expenditure, assumptions were inevitable and in general officers had erred on the side of caution to give the worst-case scenario.

Other members agreed that the Town Clerk could only work with figures that were available at the time and had managed this very well.

The Town Clerk suggested that if councillors were concerned about budget robustness, then the contingency could be increased to take into account any unforeseen expenses associated with the move to Victoria Park.

It was **AGREED** that £5,000 would be taken from the small grants budget and £5,000 from the large grants budget to increase the contingency figure from £10,000 to £20,000.

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It was **AGREED** that the budget for 2022/23 as laid out in report PR03/21 would be presented to Full Council as a recommendation from Policy and Resources Committee, with the precept to be set at £701,500.

35. CALC EMPLOYMENT AWARD SCHEME

Report PR04/21 was received and accepted.

The Town Clerk explained that the council already follows many of the practices listed in the information provided by CALC and that if the process to gain the award was very time consuming, then it may not be worth it financially as the discount was relatively small. However, the scheme could provide benefits when recruiting staff and would demonstrate that good practice is followed.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Town Council adopts and enters the CALC Employment Award Scheme.

36. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was **AGREED** that the date of the next meeting would be Wednesday 26 January 2022.

The meeting finished at 7.45 pm.

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(Chairman)