

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

**held in the Council Chamber, Belle Vue Terrace, Malvern
on Wednesday 14 December 2022 at 6.00 pm**

Councillors

C Hooper (Chairman until 6.30pm)
C Fletcher (Chairman from 6.30pm)
A Stitt
J Wilkinson

In attendance

Linda Blake - Town Clerk
Louise Wall – Minute Clerk
Cllr N Houghton – Mayor

Two members of the public

Absent

J Ashington-Carter (apologies)
N Mills (apologies)
J O'Donnell (apologies)
R McLaverty-Head (apologies)
J Satterthwaite

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from Cllr Jack Ashington-Carter, Cllr Neville Mills, Cllr James O'Donnell and Cllr Ronan McLaverty-Head were **NOTED**.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

30. 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 30 November 2022.

The Chairman announced that he would be altering the order of business so that agenda item 5, Budget 2023/24 would be brought forward.

31. BUDGET 2023/24

The Chairman thanked the Town Clerk and Operations Manager for their hard work in preparing the budget ahead of the meeting.

Report PR02/22 was received and accepted.

The Town Clerk explained that once again, producing the budget had been a difficult task with various assumptions being made, and large increases in overhead costs needing to be factored in. Best efforts had been made to keep any increase in the precept as low as possible whilst ensuring that services were maintained, but the 6% increase on the precept as recommended by Policy and Resources Committee members at the meeting on 30 November was unachievable and the proposed budget submitted to the meeting included an increase in precept of 8.6%.

The re-forecast for 2022/23 had resulted in an underspend for the year and a balance being put into reserves of £12,089.

UNADOPTED

The tax base had not been received at the time of the meeting, but using last year's tax base and an increase on precept of 8.6% resulted in an increase of £5.63 per Band D household.

Members discussed the proposed budget and whether there were any areas where savings could be made. Suggestions included:

Reducing the proposed 6% increase on staff salaries to 5%

- The Town Clerk agreed that this would be feasible, the figure of 6% being assumed following the average increase in salaries in the current year of 7%.

Delaying the return to a fully staffed Operations Team

- Not having a full team of staff throughout the summer months could mean cancellation of events and reduction in service delivery. Using temporary staff from a recruitment agency would result in higher costs overall.

Removing Jamaica Crescent play area refurbishment from projects

- Operations and Planning Committee recommended the refurbishment of Jamaica Crescent play area at their meeting on 26 October. The Town Clerk reminded members that it was one of the Town Council's duties to provide play areas, and the one at Jamaica Crescent was in need of refurbishment. The Town Clerk did not recommend removing the project from the budget for 2023/24.

Postponing purchase of replacement vehicle

- Operations and Planning Committee recommended the replacement of the 2015 Mitsubishi pick-up with an electric vehicle at their meeting on 26 October. The Town Clerk informed members that this cost would be taken from the vehicle/machinery replacement fund already in place and therefore taking the figure out from the proposed budget would have no effect on the increase in precept.

Reducing the contingency sum from £20,000 to £12,000

- Policy and Resources Committee recommended increasing the contingency sum to £30,000 at its meeting on 30 November. The Town Clerk had already removed £10,000 during budget preparation, reducing it to £20,000. Further reductions were not recommended by the Town Clerk, particularly when Officers had worked hard to already reduce expenditure as far as possible.

Cllr Clive Hooper had to leave the meeting at 6.30pm and the remaining members elected Cllr Clive Fletcher as Chairman.

The Chairman then postponed further discussion of the budget and reverted to the original order of the agenda so that members of the public could be invited to speak.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Two members of Community Action attended the meeting in support of the Malvern Town Community Support grant application for 2023/24. As there had been much information already provided within the application, they invited questions from members of the committee.

32. MALVERN TOWN COMMUNITY SUPPORT GRANT 2023/24 – COMMUNITY ACTION AND DISTRICT

Report PR01/22 was received and accepted.

The Town Clerk emphasised that the application included details on how the grant was used and how people of Malvern benefitted.

Members agreed that Community Action provides an essential service to many people who would otherwise be lonely and isolated, although it was felt that the application may not have promoted this aspect enough.

It was reported that Community Action have had to use their reserves for the last three years to cover a deficit in operations, and although they receive a grant from Worcestershire County Council for providing the community transport scheme, they do depend on the Community Support grant to cover the cost of rent at Belle Vue Terrace.

The Town Clerk explained that whilst the current rental charge of £10,900 includes a portion to cover the service charge, utility costs had increased steeply this year, and therefore it was suggested that an extra £1,100 should be considered in order that the accounts accurately reflect the costs of running the building.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to award a Malvern Town Community Support Grant for 2023/24 of £10,900 to Community Action Malvern and District.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that a further £1,100 be charged annually to cover the increase in service charges.

33. BUDGET 2023/24

The Chairman re-opened discussions on the budget.

Members of the committee agreed that whilst it would be preferable to see a precept increase of nearer to 5%, earlier discussions on the proposed budget had shown this would not be possible without reducing services and projects, and this was not satisfactory.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to reduce the proposed increase on all salaries for the period 1 April 2023 until 31 March 2024 from 6% to 5%, thereby reducing the precept by £5,000 to £757,000. This represents an increase of approximately 7.9% from the precept level in 2022/23.

A report would be presented to Full Council to reflect this change.

34. REVIEW OF DELEGATION ARRANGEMENTS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, STAFF AND OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Report PR03/22 was received and accepted.

UNADOPTED

Members reviewed the delegation arrangements as tabled in the report.

The Town Clerk informed members that under the requirements of Financial Regulations and Standing Orders, two amounts under the 'Finance' heading had changed as follows:

"The Town Clerk can, on behalf of the Council, authorise expenditure on any repair, replacement or other work of such extreme urgency that it must be done at once, up to a limit of £5,000."

- the limit for this item has increased to £10,000.

"Contracts below £25,000 approved by the Town Clerk."

- the limit for this item has decreased to £10,000.

Members noted the above amendments and **AGREED** the following:

- to change the final heading from 'Miscellaneous' to 'Other' and change the category within this section from 'car boot sales' to a more generalised 'events' category.

35. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was **AGREED** that the date of the next meeting will be Wednesday 1 February 2023 at 6.00 pm.

The meeting finished at 7.15 pm.

.....(Chairman)