

Mere Town Council

TOWN CLERK - MRS. L. C. WOOD

Minutes of the Annual Budget Meeting held on Wednesday, 22nd November 2017 at 7.00 p.m. in The Town Council Office, Duchy Manor, Springfield Road, Mere.

Present: Councillors: Mrs. K. Symonds (Chairman), A. Colman, P. Coward, R. Coward, C. Hazzard, Mrs. J. Hurd, J. Jordan, B. Norris, G. Jeans (from 8.14 p.m.), Mrs. L. Traves,

The Vice-Chairman of the Town Council, Cllr. Mrs. K. Symonds Chaired the Meeting

Apologies for absence – Cllr. Jeans sent his apologies for his late arrival due to him attending another meeting beforehand.

Declarations of Interest

- Cllr. Hazzard declared an interest in Floral Enhancements
- Cllr. John Jordan declared an interest in matters relating to the Footpath Group & Chairman's Expenses

EXEMPT BUSINESS – RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting (or part thereof) during consideration of the business set out below on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined within part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A and more particularly specified in paragraphs 14 and 1.

The Chairman started off by informing members that the draft figures prepared by the Town Clerk resulted in a 24.71% increase in the precept. She pointed out that the loss of the income from Wiltshire Council for the public toilets represented a 5% increase alone and the Town Council's remit to refurbish the public toilets would add another 15%. The Chairman felt that the committee had a range of options and one of them could be to review, more closely, the reserves that we are holding for longer-term projects. Cllr. Jordan said that he had been working on this and felt that it was possible to reduce some of the reserves in order to reduce the precept with a view to replenishing the reserves next year. He also felt, as did the Clerk, that the Town Council should not embark upon a new 7-year lease for the public toilets with sewer drains that do not work and felt that Wiltshire Council should be prepared to renew & repair the sewer drains since they are not prepared to transfer the asset. Cllr. Jordan said that the Town Council had a mandate from the public to keep the car parks and toilets free of charge and members may therefore feel that it is acceptable to have a large increase in the precept. Cllr. P. Coward agreed that everyone who attended the public meeting said that they would be happy to pay more rates in order to keep the services and facilities free of charge.

EXPENSES

ADMIN

Audit Costs – regime changes for 17/18 financial year. At present time audit fee depends on level of income/expenditure and whether or not there are any questions raised to the external auditor by members of the public etc. The Clerk pointed out that the minimum external audit fee would be £400 but had recommended a budget of £800. Cllr. Colman proposed a recommendation to reduce the budget to the minimum - £400. Proposal approved.

Election Costs – The Clerk informed members that she had been informed that the Town Council would need to share the costs of the May 2017 election but that no invoice had been received from Wiltshire Council. The Clerk did point out, however, that if it was necessary to have a bi-election then the Town Council would need to pay all the costs involved which could be as much as £3500. Members agreed to reduce reserves to £500.

Legal Services – Recommended to keep £2250 in reserves for legal services. The Clerk said that the renewal of the leases for car parks and public toilets would require professional legal expenses and also pointed out that the Croquet Club and Youth Club leases were due for renewal in 2019. Members recommended that the reserves should remain at £2250 but that there should be no extra budget made.

Staff & Councillor training – The Clerk pointed out that there would be a necessity for certain training requirements for the new groundsman & the grounds staff had identified a wish list of other training requirements. It was recommended to keep reserves of £1160 and budget a further £500.

ANDY YOUNG PAVILION

Equipment & Furniture – It was recommended that the reserves should be reduced by £2000 to £450 with a view to replenishing at the next budget but that a further £200 should be budgeted this year.

BAND HUT – It was recommended to retain reserves of £1000 and to budget a further £250 as it was pointed out that if the roof needed replacing then it would cost a lot of money and reserves needed to be built up..

BOWLING GREEN

Repairs & Maintenance – it was recommended to retain reserves of £500 but to make no extra budget.

BUILDINGS

Clock Tower Island – it was agreed to reduce reserves by £1000 to £690.

Pennybank Lane Walls – The Chairman pointed out that part of the brick wall on the eastern side of Pennybank Lane had been removed and replaced by a fence recently.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Litter bins – The Clerk pointed out that she had used the Litter Bin reserves in order to purchase the street cleaner's barrow earlier on this year and she had therefore put in a draft budget to replenish the reserves. However, members recommended that this should be removed and that the £240 should be retained as reserves.

Grounds machinery & equipment – The immediate needs identified by the grounds staff was for a new long-reach hedgetrimmer and a petrol pressure washer. Cllr. Norris said that he had a diesel pressure washer that was barely used, purchased for £1200 but that he would be willing to sell to the Town Council for £500. Members thanked Cllr. Norris for this offer and recommended that this be accepted. Members recognised that if the ride-on mower or tractor needed replacing then it would cost more than the reserves we had available. It was recommended to budget £3000 to add to reserves.

Play Equipment for Castle Hill Play Area – The Clerk reminded members that the low level wooden railway was now quite old and members agreed that funds should be budgeted in order to consider replacement in the future. Recommended to budget a further £500 to add to reserves of £1250.

Outdoor Gym Equipment – The Clerk informed members that she and the Chairman had met various companies with a view to providing quotations for this project, which included the filling in of the old swimming pool. However, only one quotation had been received at present. The quotations would allow the Town Council to apply for grant funding but a degree of match funding would probably be required. Recommended to budget £500 to add to reserves of £3500.

Public Access Defibrillator – The Clerk reminded members that this capital project was for a new defibrillator to be installed into the telephone kiosk in The Square. However, members felt that this was an unnecessary expense at the moment considering the fact that there was already a public access defibrillator nearby in Castle Street and another one at Duchy Manor. Recommended to remove reserves.

CAR PARKS

Maintenance – Recommended to budget £1500 which would offset the expenditure made this year on relining the Salisbury Street Car Park and restore the reserves.

CASTLE HILL

Flag Pole – Recommended to add a further £200 to reserves held in order to make some necessary repairs to flag pole. It was agreed that the grounds staff should be asked to help with flag raising when necessary.

Tree Management – Recommended to add £300 to allow for necessary tree works, as identified in tree report.

CEMETERY

Walls, railings & footpaths – The Clerk pointed out that the grounds staff wanted to carry out work to refurbish the main path running down the centre of the old cemetery which would require the hire of a mechanical wheelbarrow and purchase of pea gravel. Recommended to add £500 to reserves to allow for this work to be carried out.

NEW CEMETERY

New gates & drive – members were reminded that the Town Council had aspirations of installing a driveway and new gates into the new cemetery in line with the driveway and gates to the old cemetery but that this would be an expensive project and probably not within reach given the current financial climate. However, it was agreed to retain reserves of £1000.

Drainage & paths – Although it had been agreed to start rebuilding reserves for the next phase of necessary drainage & path works last year, members felt that no budget should be made this year.

WW1 Commemoration Tree – Recommended to add £350 to allow for the purchase of a significant oak tree, plaque and guard to be planted in the new cemetery to commemorate the centenary of the end of WW1.

CHANGING ROOMS

Maintenance/Repair – The Clerk pointed out that it had been necessary to replace some tiles in the changing rooms recently and pointed out that the ceilings were in need of redecoration as the paint was peeling. However, it was recommended to remove £1000 from reserves, thus reducing the reserves to £710 but to add £200 in the budget for 2018/19.

DUCHY MANOR GROUNDS

Maintenance – it was agreed to retain reserves of £1000 and to budget a further £600 to allow for work that was identified in the Fixed Wire Testing report for the electrical wiring to the Andy Young Pavilion.

Signs – Recommended to reduce reserves by £500 to £140.

GROUNDS EXPENSES

Signs – Recommended to reduce reserves to £300.

Huntsgate (Walnut Road) Play Area – It was agreed to budget £1000 to add to reserves of £1240 in order to build up funds for repairs and replacements in the Walnut Road Play Area.

Mere Community Area Partnership – Recommended to remove these funds altogether.

Payroll – see under CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

PUBLIC TOILETS

Refurbishment costs – recommended to budget £11,771 in order to allow for refurbishment costs as identified by local builders and also to replace the Wallgate wash units.

Drainage costs – although members hoped that Wiltshire Council would pay to replace the sewer drains and that the Town Council would be unhappy about signing a new lease until this work had been carried out, members also felt that if this did not happen then it would be necessary to close the public toilets. It was recommended to budget funds to allow for the replacement sewer as a precaution.

RECREATION GROUND

Trees – The Clerk reported that the recent tree assessment report had identified work to be carried out on trees in the recreation ground. Members felt that the existing reserves of £2,200 would be adequate and recommended that no further budget be made.

Youth Club Building – Members recommended that the reserves of £3320 be reduced by £1000 and that a further £500 is budgeted for next year.

SECTION 137

The limit of expenditure for S.137 during 2017/18 was £7.57 per elector for the parish.

The Section 137 grants and donations were set at the same level as last year. It was agreed to offer the existing reserves set aside to Wiltshire Good Neighbours via the SWWAB.

WHITE ROAD GARDENS PLAY AREA

The Clerk reminded members that the reserves set aside for the White Road Gardens Play Area was a commuted sum from the developers to provide play equipment in the play area for the site. However, after consultation with residents once the development was built, it was clear that a play area was not desired in that location and it was felt that the Recreation Ground play area was within close proximity. The Clerk pointed out that the commuted sum had been reduced over the years on maintenance & grass cutting of the play area at White Road. It was recommended to reduce the reserves by £4000 in lieu of the funding that has been set aside for the outdoor gym equipment in the old swimming pool area at Duchy Manor.

CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS SID

Recommended to budget £250 to use as seed funding for the application for the SWW Area Board initiative for a Speed Indicator Device.

INCOME

Public Toilets – Lease expires 31st March 2018 We took on the lease of the public toilets on the understanding that we would receive £5932 per year (which is what it cost WC to run the toilets) + an extra £605 if Tisbury took on their public toilets too. We have a signed service level agreement to this effect. (see email from Graham Garrett in Car Parks folder 16.7.12) The Clerk pointed out that the significant difference in income was due to the fact that this money would no longer be received.

Allotments – A 10% increase to allotment rents was agreed last year to be applied to all allotment w.e.f. March 2018.

Sponsorship pledges by businesses for car parks – The Clerk said that invoices for this financial year had been sent out. It was hoped that more businesses would contribute to sponsor the car parks for the new lease and the Clerk was of the understanding that the Chamber of Trade was sending out letters to businesses.

Burial fees & charges – Recommended to increase all cemetery fees by 5% for 2018/19.

Floral Sponsors – it was agreed that the Clerk should raise a notice in Mere Matters about the need for donations in the spring next year (once the tulips were out). The Clerk was asked to include, in the notice, details of payment (who cheques should be made payable to). Also to send invoices out to the businesses that originally agreed to sponsor the floral displays.

Sports Clubs fees – members recommended that all sports clubs should be asked to increase their donations by 3% (as is the Town Council's policy).

Bowls Club – It was recommended to ask the Mere Bowls Club for a financial contribution in view of the fact that they have use of the Andy Young Pavilion and the car park. Mention that the Town Council is thinking about £500.

Croquet Club – It was recommended that the Croquet Club rent should be reduced to £250 for 2018/19

Recommendation by Budget Committee: To approve a Precept of £137,206.66 on Wiltshire Council for the 2018/19 financial year which will result in a 10.03% increase or £10.76 per year on the Band D charge of the Town Council portion of the Council Tax

Meeting closed at 22.50 pm