

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 20TH DECEMBER 2022 AT 7.23PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GREENACRE CENTRE, STOTFOLD.

Committee Members present:

S Buck (Chairman), B Collier, A Cooper, M Cooper, J Hyde, D Matthews, J Smith

Also present:

K Elliott-Turner, Town Clerk and one staff member (attended virtually)

95/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Hayes.

96/22 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS ON MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE AGENDA AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

There were no disclosures of interests or requests for dispensations. Members were reminded that if at any time during the meeting they feel they have an interest in an item being discussed, they should declare it at that point.

97/22 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES

None present.

98/22 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Establishment Committee meeting held on 23rd November 2022 are confirmed as a correct record.

99/22 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION

Nothing to report.

100/22 GREENACRE PARK BAND STAND

Members considered indicative costs, styles and images of modern band stands, to be used as performance space within Greenacre Park, to mark the King's Coronation

RECOMMENDED that the council pursues a project to install a new, modern style, 5m band stand on Greenacre Park, on the school side of the park, with electricity and lighting and a hard-base, subject to being successful with grant applications for funding. The council will put in up to £30,000. Grants are to focus on bringing the community together, performance space, working with the library, school and the arts. A working party is to be put together to assist the Clerk in making the grant application.

101/22 PRECEPT FOR 2023/2024 FINANCIAL YEAR

Members considered a precept calculation using figures requested by each committee during their budget setting meetings.

With the current economic climate as it is, and many households struggling to manage their bills, it is suggested that we look again at our committee requests for next financial year.

Members considered two further calculations, which showed reductions to the Earmarked Reserves (EMR) and revenue budget, to help reduce the Precept figure further.

The first precept calculation was based on committee revenue and EMR requests from the November budget setting meetings. This results in a 78.2% increase on last year's precept figure, which is a 73.1% on last year's Band D. This is £130.80 per Band D per year, or £2.52 per week increase on the town council's part of Band D council tax.

The second calculation reduced the precept figure by reducing the EMR requests, which was supported by the explanatory report, below. Cuts to the EMR requests took the original figure of £330,000 down to £105,000, a reduction of £225,000. This results in a 43.1% increase on last year's precept figure, which is a 39% increase on last year's Band D. This is £69.82 per Band D per year, or £1.34 per week increase.

The third calculation attempted to reduce the precept figure further by cutting back the EMR requests and attempting to cut back on revenue requests. This resulted in a 40.9% increase on last year's precept figure, which is a 36.8% increase on last year's Band D. This is £65.92 per Band D per year, or £1.26 per week increase.

However, when setting the revenue requests, much of these are known costs which have to be covered, but committees also had to consider the increasing costs, such as utilities and new grass cutting contract, in order to continue providing our services and facilities. Members felt that cutting back on revenue requests would be risky, with the current economic climate, as we too have to ensure that we can meet our operating costs.

Supporting information considered by members

Revenue requirements – these have been calculated against known or estimated costs, or where agreement has been made for additional items incurring expenditure. There is little room for cutting back.

Earmarked Reserves – a total of £330,000 was requested by committees for 2023/2024, across 17 Earmarked Reserves. There are several opportunities to cut back requested EMR figures, to help reduce the precept figure.

The table below looks at the purpose or reason for holding our EMR sums, the amount requested by committees for next financial year, the Clerk's proposed revised amounts and the explanation for those proposals. Section 106 figures have not been included as they are funds obtained under legal agreement, to be used for specific purposes, and are not added to.

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Earmarked Reserve	Purpose for holding	Amount requested	Proposed revised request amounts	Notes re revised proposal
Working capital	Funds held year on year	£0	£0	n/a
Mossman	Remaining funds from retainer following build works for Mossman Centre	£0	£0	n/a
Town Strategy	Strategic projects – such as NHP (where not covered by Locality grant), or other strategic plans. Was used to fund Queen's Jubilee items	£0	£0	n/a
Buildings Fund	To ensure sufficient funds are held for refurbishment, replacement and improvements to our buildings portfolio – as per Corporate Strategic Plan	£20,000	£0	Suggested that, although we will be carrying out a refurbishment project on the Memorial Hall, funds for this could come from other sources, such as grants, etc. Other possible funding sources could be determined after consideration of the Simpson Centre future. No requirement to include additional funds in next year's figures
Cemetery Projects	Saving towards land purchase and creation of cemetery extension – as per Corporate Strategic Plan	£50,000	£0	Whilst we do need to save more funds, and the longer it takes, with land values increasing, it will take longer to reach the sums required, it is proposed that we can hold off putting funds in for one year
Teasel	Funds held year on year	£0	£0	n/a
Rec Rolling Improvements	To ensure sufficient funds are held for replacement or improvement projects – as per Corporate Strategic Plan	£75,000	£37,500	We do need to add funds to this EMR, because we will shortly have a large outlay on Riverside Playing Field MUGA project. We also intend on carrying out further projects on this site, which will likely require match funding

				contributions from the council. However, it is unlikely that we will be able to proceed with the larger projects in the immediate future, due to present materials costs
Street Lights	To ensure we hold sufficient funds for replacement lighting columns, or new columns in new locations. Also includes funds to be able to extend lighting in Riverside car park	£10,000	£10,000	n/a
Riverside MUGA sinking fund	To ensure we hold sufficient funds to be able to carry out major repairs or replacements	£20,000	£0	Although we should consider costs for future replacement or large scale repairs, as this structure has now been refurbished (completion now in January 23), we can hold off adding to the fund for a year
Arlesey Road MUGA sinking fund	To ensure we hold sufficient funds to be able to carry out major repairs or replacements	£20,000	£0	Although we should start a fund for future replacement or large scale repairs, as this structure is new (completion now in January 23), any such repairs will be covered under warranty, and therefore we can hold off adding funds for a year
Allotment hedging	To ensure funds available to carry out maintenance on allotment hedging	£1,000	£0	Suggested that this is removed, as the annual front boundary hedge cut has now been added to the grass cutting and grounds maintenance contract specification – by doing so, it would likely be more cost effective than getting in a contractor as and when required
Office equipment	To ensure funds available for replacement or new office equipment, e.g. photocopier is now	£3,500	£3,500	n/a

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	ageing, and we also need to purchase new IT/phone equipment for temporary staff member and newly created rooms within the Maple Room			
Election fund	To ensure sufficient funds to cover election fees, if contested election	£0	£0	n/a
Community Leisure Centre Fund	Held over from original project	£0	£0	n/a
Facilities team/Handyman role	To set up the facilities team – maintenance tech & town ranger, etc, including purchase of vehicle	£17,500	£15,000	These were two separate EMRs, the Handyman role being a joint committee fund last year. It is suggested that this becomes the EMR Facilities Team, and that the £2,500 requested for the Handyman role is not put forward
Christmas Lights	Annual display and event requiring funding support	£10,000	£10,000	n/a
GAC sinking fund	To ensure we hold sufficient funds to be able to carry out major repairs or replacements	£20,000	£0	Although costs for repair/replacement of large scale items such as the buildings management system, or boiler system are very high, it is considered that there are sufficient funds in the GAC sinking fund, Buildings Fund and S106 GAC fund for this and next financial year, should something expensive occur
Youth work	Support for GUHG youth participation team, as per Corporate Strategic Plan	£15,000	£15,000	n/a
Clerk of Works Arlesey Road	Held over from project to provide new football stadium at Arlesey Road	£0	£0	n/a
Riverside car park extension	Project to extend car park	£50,000	£0	Although it is acknowledged that the £40k currently held, is not sufficient to extend the car park, this project is not urgent,

				and could be held over for another year
Tree work	To ensure sufficient funds to carry out tree work, following regular inspection and 'traffic light' action system	£10,000	£10,000	n/a
Coronation fund	To fund any activities or purchases related to the King's Coronation	£4,000	£0	As with Jubilee expenditure, it is considered that funds from Town Strategy EMR could be used for this purpose
Repay S106 MUGA As per council (June 22)	Any shortfall in the Arlesey Road MUGA/Play/Gym project to come from S106 commuted sums & and repaid over 15 years	£4,000	£4,000	n/a

RECOMMENDED that the Stotfold Town Council precept figure of £913,926 for 2023/2024 be submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council.

102/22 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES, RELEVANT TO THIS COMMITTEE ONLY

Nothing to report.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.10pm.

MINUTES APPROVED (date):

SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN: