

Finance & General Purposes Committee
Minutes of a Meeting of the held on 1st December 2011

Present: Mr Salisbury (Chairman), Mrs King, Mr Blanch, Mr Mercer,
In attendance: Mrs Jones (Clerk), Mrs Sage

211 Apologies for Absence were received from Mr Gregory

212 Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations of interest regarding any matters on the agenda.

213 Public Question Time. There were no members of the public present.

214 Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd September 2011 were taken as read and confirmed as a true record.

215 Budget Statement for the Current Financial Year

The budget statements for the year to date had been previously circulated. It was noted that the current budget showed a forecast deficit of £7,000. This was due to £3,000 taken from allocated reserves for the traffic consultant, additional costs for staffing at the cemetery due to staff illness and a projected decrease in income of £3,000 from the Queen's Hall. The current forecast was a 'guesstimate' and the figures would probably change before year end. Other expenditure and income was generally in line with the budget.

216 Committee Budgets for the Forthcoming Financial Year

The committee budgets for the forthcoming financial year had been previously circulated. The budget included a 2.5% increase under most headings, with more being allowed for utilities. This included an increase in staff wages. A discussion followed on wages and it was agreed that, in view of the productivity and flexibility of the staff, this was a reasonable decision that should be supported by the Committee. The importance of justifying all such decisions was stressed by the Chairman.

The Environment Committee had put forward an increase of £3,500 in their overall budget to allow £1,500 for a replacement memorial bench and £2,000 for extra maintenance along the footpaths. After discussion, it was agreed that residents should not be asked to pay for a new bench for the churchyard and that a private donation could cover this expense. It was also agreed that the Committee should look at the contract for the footpaths and seek an alternative, possibly lower cost, quote. With these items removed from the budget it would be possible to leave the overall precept unchanged from the previous year.

A discussion followed regarding the possible re-build of the green room at the Queen's Hall. An estimate for this work had been discussed previously and further information had been received from the surveyor. It was agreed that further investigations should be undertaken to see if there really was a problem with the substructure and whether it might be possible just to repair the existing building which could result in substantially lower costs. It was noted that a sum of £20,000 should be available from S106 funding for community buildings but that a further £20,000 could be required from Parish Council funds for this work. After further debate it was agreed that £40,000 be shown in the budget for the next financial year.

The issue of ensuring that no residents were excluded from standing as a councillor on financial grounds (ie costs of baby sitting, etc) was briefly mentioned and it was agreed that this would be discussed at the next Council Meeting.

217 Parish Council Reserves

Details of the reserves had been previously circulated. At the end of the previous financial year, the reserves stood at £57,000 in general reserves and £20,000 in earmarked reserves. If the deficit figure of £7,000 was accurate, this would leave general reserves at £53,000 and earmarked reserves at £17,000. The recommendation from the auditors was that a Council should have a minimum of three months precept in reserves, with anything up to a year's precept being reasonable. By this measure the minimum figure for Parish Council reserves was £34,000. A discussion followed on the pressure on reserves in view of the possible expenditure on the Green Room and on traffic calming in the village. Much of the funding for the traffic works would come through the S106 route but if there was a shortfall this would need to be made up by the Parish Council. It was agreed that the works for the Green Room, over and above the S106 funding, could be taken from reserves during the next financial year and that, if necessary, the Parish Council could take out a loan in the future. The Youth Club building was an unknown entity at this stage but this was an issue that would probably have to be addressed in the future

218 Precept for the Forthcoming Financial Year

In view of the discussions above, it was agreed to recommend to Council that the precept remain unchanged for the forthcoming financial year at a figure of £134,800.

Signed _____