

SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Action

Minutes of the **FINANCE Committee** meeting held on **Monday 2nd December 2019** at **6.30pm** in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Swaffham.

Present: Cllr I Pilcher (in the Chair),
Cllrs J Anscombe, B Holmes, G Edwards, S Bell, J Skinner, K Sandle

Town Clerk: R Bishop
Deputy Town Clerk C Smith

In attendance Cllr C Houghton
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1. Apologies for Absence

1.1. None received.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1. Cllr G Edwards declared a personal and pecuniary interest as an allotment holder.

3. Finance related issues form Non-Member Cllrs

3.1. None received.

4. Late Items at the Chairman's Discretion

None received.

5. Minutes of the previous Meeting

5.1. The minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 28th October 2019 were signed as an accurate record by the Chairman.

6. Finance Report

6.1. Accounts to 30th September 2019 for Income & expenditure analysis 2019/20.

Cllrs noted the clean copy of the accounts, all code to code transfers and any anomalies had been corrected at the six-month point. This differed very slightly from the six-month analysis recorded in the Budget report, as the Budget report may have highlighted the issue resulting in the amendment being made.

6.2. Estimated costs of a solicitor in respect of advice relating to due diligence for a potential Asset Swap

The Town Clerk reported that prices from 4 solicitors ranged from £4k +vat and disbursements to £15k +vat and disbursements. Cllrs discussed the staging of the project and considered that stage one needed to be complete and the viability of the project established before a solicitor was appointed. It was proposed that there would be a junction point after valuations and the decision to proceed would be taken back to Full Council. Stage 1 costs would be found in 2019/20 funds.

It was agreed that at the end of stage one there would be a junction point and the decision to proceed, including appointing solicitors, would be taken back to Full Council.

It was agreed to go through the critical path analysis and mark the stages of the project.

JA

- 6.3. To appoint a commercial estate agent to carry out a red book valuation for various land and properties, as part of due diligence for a potential Asset Swap and to earmark a budget within the Land and Property budget for 2019/20

It was agreed to ratify the decision for Arnold Keys to carry out a red book valuation. As the District Valuer was unable to value all land it was agreed that Russen and Turner would be asked to provide a second valuation.

- 6.4. Confirmation from Breckland, Tesco and Milngate that all Section 106 monies will be paid

The Town Clerk reported that the £117k s106 money claim for completed projects had been approved and would be received in this financial year. The extra £53k would be claimed once a plan for the Toilet refurbishment had been finalised. A further 15K would be claimed back from Breckland for the car park expenses. Confirmation had been received from Tesco/Milngate that all STC projects are duly sanctioned as appropriate use of the section 106 money.

- 6.5. Streetlighting policy for new developments in the Town and specifically the current development at Norwich Rd by Persimmon Homes

It was reported that the field for the Persimmon development had been ploughed up and so more information was needed before a decision on whether to support this scheme or not should be made. The wider question of taking on streetlights for new developments also needed to be debated by full council and so it was proposed to take this back to the Full Council meeting. The Deputy Mayor confirmed that he was undertaking some research into the issue and would have further information available to inform the debate at the next meeting.

KS
RB

It was agreed to defer the decision regarding the lighting scheme at the Persimmon Homes development until the Full Council had debated the wider issue of taking on services from new developments.

- 6.6. Draft Critical path analysis for the potential Asset Swap.

Cllrs noted the critical path analysis for the project. it was agreed that it would be useful to have the plan split into stages. Cllr Anscombe agreed to review the plan and work with the Town Clerk to identify the stages.

It was agreed to split the plan into stages

JA
RB

7. **Draft Budget and Budget report for the financial year 2020/21 and budget presentation by the Town Clerk RFO:**

It was noted that some budget headings had been amalgamated to simply the accounts. The finance committee were in the process of reviewing services and hoped to achieve a 0% increase in precept. Any extra costs for the year would need to be met with the extra funding from the increase in tax base.

The Town Clerk presented a draft budget, the committee noted the following recommendations.

Finance Committee

- 7.1 Un-earmarked Capital Reserves – R1 £0, R2 £8,645
 7.2 Earmarked Capital Reserves -R3 to receive s106 money as it becomes available. R4 £1393, R5 to prepare grants for various project it was thought the sound system could be included. R6 £17,592
 7.3 Earmarked Revenue Reserves -Cllrs discussed Town events fund and would be considering the necessity of this budget as it was hoped that most events

Initials.....

would be self-funding. It was proposed to amalgamate the separate funds of election, play areas, streetlights, land and property and events into one cost heading of a general reserve. Grant policies would need to be reviewed to reflect this action.

It was agreed to amalgamate the separate cost centres in Earmarked Revenue reserves expenditure into one cost centre showing a general reserve and to review the Council's Grant policy for consistency.

- 7.4 Precept -R8 the committee would come back to this recommendation once further work on the budget had been completed.
- 7.5 Amenity & Agency -R9 Cllrs discussed the Relief in Need charity, it was decided to review these costs and meet with Trustees. R10 it was proposed to keep the rent for the shop at the same level. R11 noted. R12 Cllrs noted that the streetlighting bill had jumped higher, the Town Clerk would be challenging the change.

RB

It was agreed to review the costs of the administration of Relief in Need. It was agreed to recommend no increase in the rent for the shop.

Market, Events & Tourism Committee

- 7.6 Market – R13 a 2% increase in stall fees for regular traders. R14 the finance committee expressed a preference that all bills for the putting up and taking down of MTI stalls in this year be included are in this year's accounts.
- 7.7 Events & Tourism -R15 4855, R16 it was noted that the sheep fair cost £300, some Cllrs considered this good value for a well-attended event. It was proposed that the budget for Town Flags be lowered to £500.

RB

It was agreed that the budget for Town Flags be lowered to £500.

Recreation & Community Services Committee

- 7.8 Northwell Pool -R17 and 18 it was noted that this cost centre would show as expenditure.
- 7.9 Allotments -R19,20 allotments would be discussed at a future date with proposals from SCALGA. Finance committee members agreed to meet this week to progress the budget.
- 7.10 Cemetery & Churchyard - Chapel rates would be amended to cemetery rates. Income and expenditure recommendations were noted.
- 7.11 Open Spaces R23 £520 noted, R24 the finance committee would review the Grounds maintenance contract. The clock expenditure would also be reviewed as the recommendation to full council may be not to continue to fund any further repairs.

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IP
GE

Estates, Town Hall/Heritage & Maintenance Committee

- 7.12 Town Hall R25 2% increase in office hire. The committee considered if the hiring out of the office and chamber could be improved. It was noted that an interactive white board was for sale at the convent. It was considered that this type of equipment may help to attract hirers. R26 £25665 noted.
- 7.13 Public Toilets -R27 £5483 Noted

HR & Governance Committee

- 7.14 Administration & Miscellaneous -R28 it was recommended that a proposal be put to Full Council to decide if the Cllrs allowance would remain in the budget. R29 It was noted that the pension strain had been reduced to £5,000.

It was agreed to put to Full Council the question of whether Councillors would be able to claim an allowance.

GE
RB

7.15 Outside Equipment and Vehicles – R30 The Town Clerk would forward an electronic copy of the budget proposals to Cllr Edwards, amended proposals would be sent to the Town Clerk.

8. **Admission to Meetings Act (Public Bodies) 1960:**
Confidential Business following the exclusion of the public and press

9. **Swimming Pool Land**
Legal advice had been received that this land could not be used for anything other than community not for profit sport and Leisure activities. The Town Clerk confirmed that there was a right of access to the land.

It was agreed to act on the confidential advice given by the Council’s solicitor.

10. **Outstanding legal issues for the Town Pound, Church Wall, Cemetery Trees, Shambles and Buttercross**
The Town Clerk reported that he had met with the solicitor and received draft documents to further the outstanding legal issues. These documents would be shared with Cllrs for Full Council to sign off at the next meeting. The Town Clerk also reported that he would make the statutory declaration to register the Buttercross. The only outstanding issue with no progress was the Shambles.

It was agreed to circulate these four claims to Full Council with a view to resolving the outstanding issues on 11th December.

11. **Date of the next Full Council Finance meeting - Monday 13th January 2020 at 6.30pm.** NB this meeting was brought forward to the Monday before Full Council on 15th January to enable a precept recommendation to go forward for consideration.

Meeting closed 8.48pm

Chairman.....

Initials.....