

Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee held in the Committee Room at Town Hall on Monday 25th November 2024 at 5.30pm.

PRESENT: Richard Stubbings
Barry Darch
Christine Wheeler (Chair)
Joe Athorn
Chris Greenhill
Colin Hill
Peter Shannon

IN ATTENDANCE: Paul Cunningham (Town Clerk)
Steven Elvin (RFO)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 0

1. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Birrell and Chidley.

2. To receive Declarations of Interest or any requests for the granting of dispensations in relation to any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in items on the agenda

There were none.

3. To accept for accuracy and adoption the minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee meeting held on Monday 28th October 2024

RESOLVED To accept for accuracy and adoption the minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee meeting held on Monday 28th October 2024.

4. To consider revised draft of town council budget for 2025-26

RFO introduced the revised budget, incorporating changes suggested by both Development and Assets committees. He reminded councillors that most budget headings had been increased by 4% to allow for inflation.

Chair noted the projected budget shortfall of almost £51,000.

Councillors discussed the draft budget, including budgets for events and for Blyburgate Hall.

Chair proposed that the draft budget be recommended to full council for approval. This was seconded by Cllr Shannon, a vote was taken which was in favour and it was therefore

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL To approve the draft town council budget

Signed:..... 27th January 2025
Finance & Governance Committee Chair

for 2025-26.

Councillors then discussed the precept document circulated in advance of the meeting. They noted that this shows a projected Band D cost of £85.36, an increase of 22.9%. This would result in precept income to the council of £297,501.

Cllr Stubbings noted that the £20,000 for signage is likely to be funded from CIL and that the £2,000 for the former orchard site will be funded from a reserve held by the council. He therefore suggested that this £22,000 did not need to be covered by precept income and he therefore proposed an amended precept income of £275,501, making the Band D rate £79.06, a 13.85% increase on 2024-25. Chair proposed that this precept rate be recommended to full council for approval. This was seconded by Cllr Stubbings, a vote was taken which was in favour and it was therefore

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL To approve a precept demand for 2025-26 of £275,501.17, which will equate to a Band D rate of £79.06, a 13.85% increase on 2024-25.

5. To review the Committee Structure Review from 2022 and to consider any implications for potential changes to current committee structure and/or committee responsibilities

Chair introduced this item, referencing that the report had been written before she rejoined the council. She suggested that the item be deferred to allow a full discussion at the next meeting of the committee. She invited comments from councillors. Cllr Stubbings reported on a conversation that he had had with Cllr Chidley, in which they had discussed the possibility of DCSP Committee agreeing actions which Assets & Estates would then be 'charged' with implementing. Cllr Greenhill noted that the 'Town, Tourism and Events' Committee that had been recommended in the report had morphed into the DCSP Committee but that some elements, such as the council's role in promoting the town centre, had been missed.

Councillors agreed to defer consideration of the report to the next meeting of the committee.

6. To consider a revised Licence for Thirst to occupy the former Ambulance Station

Chair noted that the document is showing the wrong date in Section 5.1 and that the Thirst address is missing in Section 6.1.b.

Cllr Darch proposed that, subject to the correction of these two errors, the draft licence be recommended to full council for approval. This was seconded by Cllr Athorn, a vote was taken which was in favour and it was therefore

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL To approve the draft licence for Thirst to occupy the former Ambulance Station, subject to the two corrections agreed above.

7. To consider what changes if any are needed to the council's Complaints Procedure

Councillors considered the existing complaints procedure. Chair suggested that clarification of the phrase "serious nature" would be helpful. Town Clerk suggested that complaints would be notified to councillors where they were about an individual

Signed:..... 27th January 2025
Finance & Governance Committee Chair

member of staff or councillor, where they were regarding a high-risk incident and where there was a pattern of multiple concerns about the same issue.

Cllr Darch proposed that the current Complaints Procedure be retained. This was seconded by Cllr Shannon, a vote was taken which was in favour and it was therefore **RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL** That no changes are needed to the current Complaints Procedure.

8. To consider identifying priorities for spending the council's CIL funds

Chair reported that a further sum of £26,717 has been set aside from CIL but not yet spent, for the parking improvements off Common Lane. This leaves an effective balance of £191,321, although the budgeted £20,000 for signage would reduce that to £171,321.

Councillors discussed other potential projects. Chair proposed that both refurbishing the Quay toilet block and installing electricity to the north side of the Quay be treated as urgent projects to be funded by CIL funds. This was seconded by Cllr Darch, a vote was taken which was in favour and it was therefore

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL that both refurbishing the Quay toilet block and installing electricity to the north side of the Quay be treated as urgent projects to be funded by CIL funds.

9. To consider a grant request from Beccles CAB

Chair noted the previous discussions that councillors had had with East Suffolk Council, the Townlands Charity (in their role as CAB's landlord) and CAB themselves about the lack of 'drop-in' options for clients.

Cllr Darch noted that this issue seems to have been addressed in the CAB correspondence. Some other councillors were concerned either that the wording was open to interpretation or that the notice in the CAB office window discouraged drop-ins. Cllr Darch therefore proposed that the committee recommend to full council to award a grant of £3,000, subject to further reassurance being provided by CAB about the availability of drop-ins. This was seconded by Cllr Greenhill, a vote was taken which was in favour and it was therefore

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL To award a grant of £3,000 to Beccles CAB, subject to further reassurance being provided by CAB about the availability of drop-ins.

10. To consider subscribing to 'Congresso' meeting management software

Town Clerk explained that he and Deputy Town Clerk had tested this software and that they were recommending it, largely to maximise their time and to avoid a disproportionate amount of time being spent on the mechanics of meeting minutes, actions and attendance records.

Cllr Greenhill proposed that the committee recommend to full council to subscribe to 'Congresso' at £49 per month. This was seconded by Cllr Stubbings, a vote was taken which was in favour and it was therefore

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL To subscribe to 'Congresso' meeting

Signed:..... 27th January 2025

Finance & Governance Committee Chair

management software at a cost of £49 per month.

11. To consider solutions from IT contractor regarding security of the council's electronic data

Councillors discussed the two options in the IT contractor's email. Cllr Stubbings proposed that whichever solution was adopted should be chosen as part of a council Disaster Recovery Plan. This was seconded by Chair, a vote was taken which was in favour and it was therefore

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL To create a council Disaster Recovery Plan, part of which would be a decision on the type of security back-up.

Cllr Stubbings agreed to work with Town Clerk on Recovery Plan if approved.

12. To agree the date of next meeting

Councillors agreed that the next meeting should be held on Monday 27th January 2025 at 5.45pm.

Meeting closed at 6.35pm.