

Town Council
19th February 2019 at 4.00pm

Present: Councillors: K Wattingham
D Abbott
J Carroll
Ms L Ellaway (arrived 4.06pm)
D Dixon-Wilkinson
Mrs Y Farrell
Ms J Hillyard
M Kennedy
Mrs T McMahan
C Slough
AS Swain
Mrs S Thorne (arrived 4.05pm)
T Welch

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk

Public: 0

9796 APOLOGIES

None.

9797 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Cllr Hillyard queried whether options for enhancing the chamber audio recording had been progressed as this continued to be raised on social media. It was advised that it was anticipated that an option would be tested later that week, although budget concerns were highlighted. It was agreed that should budget difficulties arise that the matter would be presented to a suitable committee in due course.

9798 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

9799 2019/20 BUDGET

At the meeting on 28th January 2019 Members approved a precept for 2019/20 of £861,916.

Members were referred to:

- Revised Officers Draft Budget and schedules of EMR's which facilitated a precept of £861,916 as circulated with the agenda for 28th January;
- A draft budget compiled by the Liberal Democrat Group, the Community Independent Alliance and the Independent Group which presented a deficit budget of £7,117. To assist, officers had compiled Summary of Movements of Earmarked

Reserves (EMR) for 2018/19 and a Predicted Summary of Movements of Earmarked Reserves (EMR) for 2019/20. It was highlighted that the information provided on EMR was based on officer's interpretation of the member budget and as such may not accurately reflect members intentions. Members had been requested to provide a budget justification detail, however at the time of the meeting this had not been received.

Members were advised that:

- the opening balance of General Reserves at 1st April 2018 was £513,362.
- the correction of the EMR schedule to reflect the council decision to transfer into an EMR £200,000 for new office provision from General Reserves had been made within 2018/19.
- there was a predicted overspend in 2018/19 of expenditure over income. This related to many variances within the budget between the budgeted amount and the predicted spend although of particular note were the variances associated with cost centre 191, Personnel / Staff costs.
- the figure for General Reserves was predicted to be between £231,664 and £273,362 at 1st April 2019.

The recommended level of general reserves was confirmed that the council should have a minimum general reserve of not less than 3 months net revenue expenditure (NRE) (i.e. excluding loan charges and capital expenditure provisions and (net) earmarked reserve transfers). Based on NRE the predicted level of general reserves at 1st April 2019 was sufficient.

Members discussed in more detail the draft budget put forward by members, such that all further discussion and resolution related to the member draft budget.

Members discussed the codes under cost center 191 relating to staff salaries. It was confirmed that with the budget proposed by members it would not be possible for the council to have 2 apprentices. There was debate around this including discussion over a town ranger position and the desirability of maintaining an apprenticeship scheme.

The Large Capital Grant process was explained to justify the amount included in both draft budgets.

Concerns were expressed over the level of use of reserves and it was highlighted that the council would need to stay within the budget as there was little or no scope for spend outside of the budget.

To address the budgeted shortfall in relation to personnel costs in the members draft budget it was suggested that £30,000 be transferred equally from EMR's titled Pavilion Renovation, Allotments and New Office Provision. There was a further suggestion that all of the £30,000 be transferred from EMR New Office Provision. It was then suggested that it would be for the new council to determine how to address this deficit.

Cllr Kennedy proposed an amendment to member draft budget and the agenda recommendation to:

To approve the budget for 2019/20 subject to £30,000 being transferred equally from EMR's titled Pavilion Renovation, Allotments and New Office Provision into cost center 191 Personnel / Staff Costs.

Proposed by: Cllr Kennedy, Seconded by: Cllr Welch.

Members voted on the proposed amendment:

Members for: 7

Members against: 6

Abstentions: 0

Accordingly, the amendment was carried and became the substantive motion.

Members voted on the substantive motion.

Members for: 6

Members against: 6

Abstentions: 1

Due to the equal votes for and against the Chair was invited to use his casting vote. Cllr Wattingham voted for the substantive motion.

Resolved: To approve the budget for 2019/20 subject to £30,000 being transferred equally from EMR's titled Pavilion Renovation, Allotments and New Office Provision into cost centre 191 Personnel / Staff Costs.

Dated this 25th day of March 2019

Chairman