

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

**HELD AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GROVE HOUSE, HIGH STREET NORTH,
DUNSTABLE**

ON MONDAY 18 JANUARY 2021

Present: Councillor Peter Hollick (Town Mayor), Gloria Martin (Deputy Town Mayor), Sid Abbott (Chairman), Philip Crawley (Vice-Chairman), Wendy Bater, John Gurney, Kenson Gurney, Liz Jones, Lee Roberts, and Johnson Tamara

In Attendance: David Ashlee (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), David Brough (Senior Finance Manager) and Ian Reed (Democratic Services Manager)

Apologies for Absence: Cameron Restall

Public Attendance: None

17. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 16 November 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

19. BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2021/22

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented the report detailing the Council's Budget proposals for 2021/22 including the draft budget recommendations of the Community and Grounds and Environmental Services Committees. Members raised a number of issues.

- The Town Councils' future consideration of delivering its Corporate Plan aspirations in the following three year's.
- Covid-19 and its impact on service delivery and the holding of events.
- Promotion of HSHAZ.
- The publication of an edition of Talk of the Town in March/April 2021 to highlight the performance of the Council and update on activities.

RECOMMENDED: i) that the proposed budget for 2021/22 be presented to Council for approval (as enclosed).

ii) that the Town Clerk and Chief Executive be authorised to incur the various item of expenditure detailed in the budget, subject to compliance with the requirements of the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

iii) that the revised scale of fees and charges, set out in the report, be approved with effect from 1st April 2021 or the start of the 2021/22 winter playing season, as appropriate: and

iv) that, in consequence of the foregoing recommendations, the Town Council issue a precept upon Central Bedfordshire Council in the sum of £2,393,969, resulting in a Dunstable Town Council Tax (Band D) at the rate of £182.02 per annum.

20. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive and the Senior Finance Manager presented the financial monitoring report. It was noted that there was likely to be a potential underspend at the end of the financial year of £40,560. However, there was uncertainty on how COVID-19 in general and the January 2021 lockdown in particular would affect the year end.

The Committee noted the current balance of the Council's earmarked reserves as of 31 December 2020 and known commitments in the current financial year. The Committee had been circulated with the agenda the June 2020 internal audit report and the November 2020 interim internal audit report. Members noted that both reports did not raise any issues or recommendations and praised the sound approach of the Council.

The Financial Monitoring report also recommended an update to the Council's Treasury Management Policy which recommended an increase to the base level of the Council's General Reserve to £465,000 which better reflected the Council's overall staffing liability. The Committee also wanted to record its thanks to the Town Clerk and Chief Executive, the Senior Finance Manager and the Finance and Procurement Manager for their work and dedication over the past financial year.

RESOLVED: that the above reports be noted and the updated Treasury Management Policy to maintain a general balance of £465,000 or 25% of the salary budget, whichever is the higher to reflect current salary commitments to protect the Council from unforeseen events and give time to respond to such events, be adopted.

21. PROCUREMENT POLICY

The Committee considered a report that recommended the adoption of a new Procurement Policy. The Committee was advised that the adoption of the policy would ensure the following of proper procedures and rules and help ensure it obtained best value for money. It was further noted the policy advocated the support of the local economy by prioritising where appropriate the local procurement of goods and services within a five-mile radius of Dunstable.

RESOLVED: that the proposed Procurement Policy be adopted

22. REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

- a) CAB Management Committee – Councillor Bater reported that the service was operational and continuing to support vulnerable households in the town.
- b) DITA – Councillor Hollick reported that Richard Richter had died recently. When the DITA leaflet was produced there would be a recognition of the work of Mr Richter
- c) Hospice at Home Management Committee – Councillor Jones reported that there had been a virtual meeting held recently. Unfortunately, a cherished volunteer had recently died.
- d) Ashton Alms-houses Charity – Councillor Hollick gave an update report on the refurbished flat. A tenant would move in at the end of the month and a fruit tree was to be planted in the garden.

The meeting closed at 19.55.