



CHIRK TOWN COUNCIL CYNGOR TREF Y WAUN

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 9TH DECEMBER 2020

5pm, held virtually on-line over video /telephone conferencing

Present

Cllrs. Mr Brian Colley (BC) - Chairman,
Mr Mark Holmes (MH) and

Mr Gareth Baines (GB),
Mrs Jackie Allen (JA)

Mr Frank Hemmings (FH),

Also in attendance:

Cllrs Mrs Dorothy Griffiths,

Mrs Barbara Humphreys,

Miss Lynne Painter

Mrs Karen Brown (KB) - Clerk to the Council,

Mrs Rebecca Ap Gwyn (RAG) – Administration Officer

1. To Accept Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs. Mrs Sarah Williams, Mr Terry Evans and Mr Chris Burgoyne.

2. To make Declarations of Interest on items on the agenda

None.

3. External Audit 2019-20 – Conclusion of Audit Report

The Clerk went through the Auditor General for Wales' Audit Certificate and report.

Due to the Council failing to publish Council Committee minutes on its website the Council has received a qualified audit.

The Clerk reported that she was aware of this issue since completing the ILCA training, and is easily addressed for this year. All minutes (including committees) will be published backdated to 1st April 2020 on the new website.

The Committee noted the other matters drawn to the Council's attention which did not affect the audit opinion.

4. 2021/22 Budget Preparation

The Clerk presented the Draft 2021/22 budget and reported that the budget takes account of the three Council agreed priorities (new website, health and safety and Cemetery works). However she added that there had not been adequate time to get specific quotes for works and therefore estimates are used. It was agreed that the priorities would be discussed in September 2021 in preparation for the 2022/23 budget setting process.

The Clerk had prepared and shared the detailed year end estimated budget position for 2020/21. There were no questions relating to the current year end position.

The Clerk took Members through each budget cost centre – key points discussed:

- **Cemetery**

The new phase expansion has been costed with £32,000 from reserves. Members discussed adding a further £10,000 from this years budgets, but due to the effect on the Precept it was

agreed not too. Members questioned how many plots were left in the Cemetery, but this information is currently unknown and will form part of this project. JA highlighted the cost of consecrating the land. The Finance Committee agreed to keep the new phase expansion at £34,000 and once detailed costings are known this will be brought back to Council. All other costs are fairly static. GB highlighted that a review of the burial costs should be undertaken once the improvement costs and number of remaining plots are known.

- Clerk

The Clerk reported that although the recent announcement by the Chancellor of a public sector pay freeze; SLCC on behalf of local Government employers have clarified, the Government has no formal role around the decisions in these pay negotiations and it will be 'business as usual'. Therefore the Clerk has added a cautious 2% pay uplift for the Administration Officer role but no uplift for the Clerks salary. The Finance committee agreed that 2% for the Clerks salary should be added. **Action:** Clerk to amend the budget.

The Clerk had increased the training budget slightly due to both office staff being new in post. This was supported.

- Community Agent

This is cost neutral on the Councils budget due to being grant funded by Wrexham Council.

- Council Administration

Most costs remain similar to last year with additional budget for the design of a new Council website of approx. £3,000. Health and Safety outsourced work as previously agreed by Council of £5,000 and £500 to address some of the health and safety training gaps. The Finance Committee agreed to these costs.

- Environmental

The Finance Committee agreed to increase the Christmas Lights contribution from £1,000 to £1,500 to match Chirk in Bloom.

FH & MH declared an interest in the Celebration Lights Committee.

CCTV – only £500 for the annual maintenance had been costed into the budget, no additional cameras. This was discussed in detail and it was felt that due to the large investment made last year, that the Council were ahead in its expansion. The matter would be reconsidered next financial year. BC also noted the amount of time it takes the staff to look through the footage. Members questioned if the PCSO's can be trained to use the CCTV. **Action:** Clerk to explore training with the PCSOs.

- Members

The amount for Councillors allowance was queried – were WCBC Members entitled to it and did the Chair/Vice Chair get a larger amount? The Clerk was unsure and agreed to check this amount. **Action:** Clerk to ensure enough money is allocated.

- Parish Hall

The Clerk reported that for the purpose of the budget – best case scenario had been used with the Parish Hall income returning to a pre-covid position. All expenditure had also been budgeted in-line with pre-covid running costs and therefore if income is lower than expected, the costs will also reduce. This was discussed and supported by the Finance Committee. It was agreed that any major repairs would need to be considered by Council to come from reserves. A 2% pay uplift had been added to the Caretakers wages.

- Recreational Grounds
£5,000 for repairs to play equipment and £5,000 for new play equipment had been budgeted. The Clerk reported that following the seven play inspection reports there were some 'Amber' risk items which needed addressing within one year and Pentre play area had the largest amount of work needed. Detailed specification had gone out to three companies for quotes but specific quotes had not been received. FH also highlighted the fencing at Pentre needed replacing. JA thought that Kronospan had made a commitment to donate the fencing materials and all the Council needed to do was write to Kronospan requesting to take up the offer, once it decides when to install. The Finance Committee were happy with the budgeted amounts and if quotes came in higher than this amount then difficult decisions would have to be taken.
- Precept
A small increase in the annual precept of just over £1,000 was considered to be a good result, resulting in a percentage increase of approx. 1.6% and a £1.20 per household increase.
The Finance Committee were happy to propose to Council a Precept of £120,548.

Meeting closed 18:15

Signed

Chairman

Date