



CHIRK TOWN COUNCIL CYNGOR TREF Y WAUN

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 22nd FEBRUARY 2021 7pm, held virtually on-line over video /telephone conferencing

Present

Cllrs. Mr Brian Colley (BC) - Chairman,
Mrs Jackie Allen (JA),

Mr Frank Hemmings (FH),
Mr Chris Burgoyne (CB),

Mr Mark Holmes (MH),
Mr Terry Evans (TE)

Also in attendance:

Cllrs Mrs Dorothy Griffiths and Mrs Barbara Humphreys,
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. Cllr Gareth Baines was not in attendance.

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

None.

3. 2020/21 Quarter 3 Budget Report & Bank Reconciliation - Including Community Agent funding data

The Clerk presented the Q3 budget position to the Committee Members– key points discussed:

Cemetery

- Cemetery income is average, the Council has not seen an increase in deaths during this past 12 months, despite the pandemic.
- There has been no tree works in the cemetery this year and caretaker costs are lower than budgeted due to the lockdown.

Clerk

- The Clerk salary budget line will be an underspend this year due to the Admin Officer not being appointed until October 2020.
- There is no spend on travel expenses due to the lockdown this year.

Community Agent

- Usually the Community Agent budget is cost neutral, however the Council has funded additional hours this year which will exceed the grant income.
- There has been a couple of large donations made towards the Christmas Hampers, donations have exceeded costs and this money will be ringfenced at year-end for ongoing food hampers during the pandemic.
- A separate spreadsheet showing a breakdown of grant income and costs was shared with the Committee as requested at the last meeting.

Council Administration

- Most costs remain on track as per budget line.
- VAT is reported in a different way in Scribe compared to previous years and therefore the two VAT budget lines both have a nil spend against them.

- Consultant fees is higher than budgeted due to Council authorising the H&S Consultant.
- IT equipment has overspent due to requiring two Laptops not one.

Environmental

- The clerk explained about the specialist scanning work needed on the three oak trees in the Recreational Grounds. It is likely that this can be achieved before year end.
- Christmas light expenditure will be offset by income from the Celebration Lights Committee.
- Lengthsman post has not been recruited for, leaving an underspend.

Members

- Very little spend in this area so far this year. The Clerk committed to paying the Councillors allowance by the year end.

Parish Hall

- Rental income remains consistent.

Recreational Grounds

- Caretaking for litter and play inspections is slightly underspent due to lockdown restrictions this year.
- Play equipment repairs – The Clerk is trying to seek quotes, but this is proving difficult as many companies are experiencing high demand at this time. Repairs and new equipment are needed and it is likely that this budget will need to be earmarked in reserves at year end. Discussion took place about the fence in Pentre, FH reported that the fence is very hazardous in places. Kronospan had agreed several years ago to provide the timber for the fence, but it was unknown if this offer was still valid. FH proposed that Kronospan is approached again to donate the timber and for the Council to fund the installation of a new fence. MH seconded the proposal. The Committee agreed to recommend to Council.
Action: JA to ask Kronospan about donation of timber.
Action: Clerk to arrange for measuring up of works required.
- The budget for the trees will not be spent in this year and will be required next year once the results of the tree scanning is known.

Precept

- The full precept has been received from Wrexham Council.

Overall, this year end position is likely to show a reduction in income and a greater reduction in expenditure against planned budget. There were no additional questions.

The Clerk reported the ongoing problem with bank reconciliation and the steps which had been taken to resolve the issue with Scribe. The Committee asked a range of questions and were happy it was being dealt with.

FH proposed to accept the Quarter 3 budget report. MH seconded the proposal, all agreed.

4. 2020/21 Interim Audit Report

The Clerk highlighted the challenges of a remote audit and drew attention to the conclusion of the report which stated '*On the basis of the internal audit work carried out, which was limited to the tests indicated above, in our view the council's system of internal controls is in place, adequate for the purpose intended and effective, subject to the recommendations overleaf.*'

The two recommendations were discussed:

1 - Year end procedures should be improved to ensure all creditors and accruals are identified and included in the council Balance Sheet.

The Clerk reported that this was already addressed in the new Scribe system by recording the month the invoice relates to in the detail to ensure at year end that all invoices are correctly accounted for.

2 - The council should establish a contracts register which should be regularly reviewed to identify those contracts where the upcoming end date signifies that a tender or quotation process is required, or whether a decision is needed regarding an extension which is provided for in the contract terms.

This recommendation is noted.

The Finance Committee were pleased with an adequate and effective audit conclusion and JA proposed to recommend to Council to accept and approve the report. MH seconded the proposal. Agreed.

Action: Recommend to Council.

5. New Financial Regulations

A smaller group of Councillors met to go through the detail of the new model regulations and to adapt to suit Chirk Town Council. The draft was shared with the Committee. One Voice Wales was approached for advice on three items, this advice was shared and the Committee agreed to remove section 3.1, 3.3 and the last line of 5.1 from the model document. In relation to 5.1 and the need for credit checks, CB stated that the banks perform their own credit checks as part of the process of being bank signatories. The clerk went quickly through each section and there were no further queries. JA proposed to present the Financial Regulations to Council for adoption. FH seconded, all agreed.

Action: Clerk to agenda adoption of Financial Regulations at the March Council meeting

6. Consideration of the following purchases:

A) A Wheelchair Ramp for Chirk Surgery

Following the mass vaccination days, it was identified that residents receiving their vaccine were required to enter the building at the back. This was not fully accessible and only small wooden blocks were used by the kerb for wheelchair users. Councillors had experienced first hand how difficult it was for wheelchair users to get up the kerb and suggested purchasing a metal ramp for the Surgery. Members asked why the Surgery were not addressing this issue themselves? and also highlighted health and safety and liability for equipment concerns. TE stated that the Council should not be purchasing this for insurance reasons, but the Surgery could approach the Council for a donation. FH suggested that the Surgery could hire a portable ramp until a permanent one is built. Concerns raised over donating to a profit making organisation was against the financial regulations. The Finance Committee declined to support at this stage.

B) Office Mobile Phone

The Clerk reported that when first in post an office mobile phone was discussed and declined. However, over the past 18 months the Clerk has found that she uses her personal mobile for photos and messaging contractors etc a lot. It was proposed that with the £500 underspend on travel expenses, that an office mobile phone is considered. JA proposed to get an office mobile phone. MH seconded. To be recommended to Council.

Action: Clerk to look into different phone options, purchase, contract, pay as you go etc.

Meeting closed 20:05

Signed

Chairman

Date