

Minutes of the ONLINE Finance, Budgets & Staffing Committee of Costessey Town Council, held via Zoom at 10.30am on 5 January 2021

Present: Cllrs G Jones (Chair), J Amis, G Dole, S Hannant, T Laidlaw and P O'Connor; H Elias (Town Clerk) & N Bailey (Deputy Clerk)

To receive apologies for absence

F001/21: Apologies were received from Cllr G Blundell (home schooling)

To receive declarations of interest

F002/21: Cllr S Hannant declared a pecuniary interest in any item involving Barclays Bank as she is in receipt of a Barclays pension.

To confirm and sign the Minutes of the previous FB&S meeting on 17 December 2020

F003/21: The meeting finished at 11:20am not pm

RESOLVED to approve the minutes as a true record with the above amendment.

To receive updates on the previous minutes (No resolutions may be passed)

F004/21: Snagging work had started on the drainage at the Queen's Hills Community Centre, with Anglian Water inspections booked.

To consider the revised Budget figures for 2021-22 and make recommendations to full Council including Tax Base and latest forecast

F005/21: Although more dwellings had been built since the previous year, the Tax Base had decreased by 6 to 5451 so, if there were no increase in the Band D rate for Costessey Town Council it would result in a £750 reduction in total Precept income for 2021/22. It was likely that the other three charging authorities (Police, Norfolk County Council & South Norfolk Council) would increase their Council Tax charges.

F006/21: The covering report (Version Two) was compiled by the Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer prior to the Christmas/New Year changes in Government Coronavirus restrictions. Audit requirements meant the Council had to budget realistically. If the tax charged remained the same, the total 2021-22 Precept income would be £659,026. The recommendation to hold Council Tax charges at the current 2020-21 rate (calculated using the Band D equivalent of £120.90 pa) for 2021-22 would result in a deficit budget. Projections were for a 20-21 surplus of approx. £88,000, so two thirds approx. £56,000 could be used to cover the following year's expected increases in expenditure, and the anticipated 50% reduction in income from hall hire.

F007/21: The estimated 50% reduction in hall hire revenue was made prior to the current lockdown, when hall hires were beginning to return, and it was thought that by April the Coronavirus vaccine would mean more activities and bookings returning to the community facilities in September. This might no longer be a valid assumption.

F008/21: The report contained a list of areas where an increased budget was required, and Members requested a narrative be added ready for the Full Council meeting on 12 January 2021. Some expenditure was difficult to budget for, as formal notification of the cost for 2021-22 had not been received e.g. Rates and other levies subject to change.

F009/21: Following the termination of the External Cleaning Contract mid 2020-21, the TUPE transfer of a cleaner, cover undertaken by the Buildings Manager, and the requirement to pay a new contractor to unlock/lock vehicle gates at three sites, there were some operational and staffing

changes which would come into full effect for during 2021/22. These had resulted in large differences in the figures in the codes from the current to the forthcoming year.

F010/21: In addition to the above, staffing costs would increase if the halls were being hired more, and a 16hr pw cleaner would be required. Additionally, a part-time Grounds Person would be needed when new open spaces and play areas were transferred, and a Minutes Secretary if a potential re-structure of committees took place.

F011/21: The Budget Code 4205/102 Description 'Civic Reception' should be changed to 'Civic Event Support'. **ACTION: Town Clerk**

F012/21: Assumptions and Projections were difficult to make around certain aspects of spending such as Property Maintenance. The projected £88,000 surplus for 2020-21 was based on some revenue from hall hire during January, February, and March 2021, which would now be impacted by lockdown. The Council might be eligible for a max £9,000 Business Grant announced today. Where the current financial year's expenditure is fixed, it should be identified accordingly in the report. Business rates on Council Buildings should be re-estimated for 2021-22 with a 3% increase.

F013/21: Version Three of the report should recommend no increase in tax and should include a narrative/rationale against each of the likely increases in expenditure already identified. An introduction was needed to include some primary assumptions.

RESOLVED that the figures and the Report be amended as per the discussion in the meeting. Version Three of the report recommending a deficit budget should be presented to full Council with no increases to the Costessey council tax rate of £120.90 per annum Band D equivalent. ACTION: Town Clerk

To receive a general update on Finance, Budget or Staffing matters

F014/21: There were no updates to report other than confidential matters discussed later.

F015/21: RESOLVED to confirm the date of the next ONLINE F,B&S Meeting as Friday 22 January 2021 at 10.30am via Zoom.

F016/21: RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 on the grounds that it was not in the public interest to disclose discussion on the items below, due to the discussions relating to exempt information on staffing and employment contracts.

No members of the press or public were present, but the meeting was live streamed to this point.

***THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WERE HEARD IN CONFIDENCE**

To consider Staffing issues

F017/21: Staffing deployment was re-aligned to cover services during lockdown. Every effort was being made to reduce the risk to employees.

F018/21: The meeting closed at 12:20pm

Chair:

Date: