

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 7TH DECEMBER 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held in the Church Hall, St Clare's Church St. Cuthberts Way Newton Aycliffe on Wednesday 7th December 2022 at 7.15pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Arun M. Chandran (Chairman)

Councillors Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, Bob Fleming, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Sandra Haigh, Andy Hill, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward, and John Woodward.

OFFICIALS

Mr. Dan Austin (Town Clerk)

Mrs. Tracey Woodhead (Finance Manager)

Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administrative Officer)

73. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Dorothy Bowman, John Clark, Neil Collinson, George Gray, Phillip Hawkins, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, Andrea Miller and Ken Robson.

74. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS

No dispensation requests had been received.

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

76. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

77. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Bob Fleming, and seconded by Councillor Michael Stead and

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 26th October 2022 and the minutes of the special meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 31st October 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

78. PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Bob Fleming, and seconded by Councillor Brian Haigh and

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub Committee, held on the 16th November 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

79. ACCOUNT CONTROL SHEETS

Account Control Sheets for the period 20th October to 29th November 2022 and the General Bank Account for October 2022 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the Account Control Sheets for the period 20th October to 29th November 2022 and the General Bank Account for October 2022 be received.

80. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

The Town Clerk submitted a report setting out the Grants and Donations requests which had been received since the last meeting.

It was noted that the following funds were available:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Donations Budget | £2,298 |
| Youth Council Grants Budget | £1,500 |
| Community Grants Fund | £22,643 |
| Community Benefit Fund | £5,109 |

The following grant and donation requests were considered:

a) **Newton Aycliffe Youth Football Club Under 8's Eagles**

Newton Aycliffe Youth Football Club Under 8's Eagles submitted a donation request for up to £450 towards the cost of winter weather clothing (coats, hats etc) and indoor training equipment (indoor balls).

It was proposed by Councillor John Moore and seconded by Councillor Bob Fleming and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- i) that a donation of £450 be given to Newton Aycliffe Youth Football Club Under 8's Eagles towards the cost of winter weather clothing and indoor training equipment from the General Donations Budget.

b) **Ben and Kyle Alderson – Great Britain and England Water Polo Squad**

A request for financial assistance, via a donation, towards training expenses including training fees, kit, overnight accommodation, and fuel costs was received from the mother of two young men who have been selected for the Great Britain and England Junior Water Polo Squads from the Sedgfield Water Polo Club.

It was proposed by Councillor Bob Fleming, and seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- ii) that a donation of £350 and £250 respectively, be given to the two Great Britain and England Junior Water Polo players towards funding their training expenses from the General Donations Budget.

c) John Wade Group

Following the spate of vehicles accessing and damaging the sports fields at the Oakleaf Sports Complex, the Council put out an appeal for assistance to which John Wade Group responded and generously agreed to donate thirty substantial boulders which have now been positioned along the access points to help prevent any further damage.

The Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee asked the Town Clerk to include a request that the Council consider offering two tickets to the 2023 Civic Dinner to John Wade Group as a gesture of thanks.

Councillor Bob Fleming proposed that the offer be increased to four tickets, this was seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- iii) that a donation of four tickets be given to John Wade Group with the cost funded from the General Donations Budget.

A letter of thanks was received from a member of the bowls club in relation to the recent purchase of a specialist wheelchair for the Oak Leaf Sports Complex.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- iv) that the letter be received.

81. 2022/23 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET POSITIONS TO 31ST OCTOBER 2022 AND PROJECTION OF EXPECTED YEAR-END OUTTURN

The Finance Manager presented the seven-month financial position on the Council's approved 2022/23 Revenue and Capital Budget up to 31st October 2022, along with a forecast of the expected year-end outturn position.

Councillor Fleming wished to draw attention to the increased running costs at the Oakleaf Sports Complex.

A debate took place regarding the £25,000 allocated in the COVID Recovery Fund for potential improvements to the Elmfield site and whether this should be deleted or retained.

The Chairman advised there were no current plans to spend this money and this would be re-appraised at a later date. The Town Clerk advised that this would be decided as part of the consideration of the final outturn figures next year.

Councillor Eddy Adam stated it was a sensible option to keep an open mind on the use of these balances.

He referenced that the Council is awaiting the architects report and tender prices for potential improvements to Simpasture Pavilion which would be subject to a funding bid to the Towns and Villages Fund.

Councillor Adam stated that he was minded to bring a proposal to the January Meeting to request consideration for setting aside the £25,000 allocated for the Elmfield site for match funding towards the Simpasture Pavilion project.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that

- a) the seven-month financial position on the Council's 2022/23 Revenue and Capital Budgets and the projection of year-end expected outturn be received; and
- b) the £25,000 allocated in the COVID Recovery Fund for the Elmfield site improvements is not progressed and the allocation of this money is reconsidered at a future meeting; and
- c) a further Revenue and Capital Budget Position Report be received at the January Policy and Resources Committee, detailing the financial position as at 31st December 2022 and an updated projection of expected outturn be given.

82. 2023/24 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET SETTING UPDATE

The Finance Manager submitted a report to update members on a number of further developments and potential changes impacting upon the draft 2023/24 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Budget.

The report also requested consideration of the options available in relation to the proposed level of Precept and Town Council Tax for next year and requested Members to provisionally advise officers of their preferred option which would then enable the Finance Manager to finalise the 2023/24 Revenue Budget ahead of the final reporting and approval of the 2023/24 Precept in January 2023.

The Chairman made a short speech highlighting that the Council needs to be prepared for the uncertainties and potential unforeseen budget pressures faced next year and beyond and highlighted that balances and reserves are diminishing. There is a need to protect the Council's capital reserves and include an element of protection within the budget via a contingency sum.

Taking all of this into account Councillor Chandran wished to propose the higher level of council tax increase, referenced in Option 5 in the report, of 9.49% or £1.34 per month at Council Tax Band A next year. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Bob Fleming.

Councillor Michael Stead stated that he disagreed with the increases set out in the report and had expected the percentage council tax increases to be lower following the identification of savings at previous meetings.

Councillor Eddy Adam stated that he mostly agreed with the comments made by the Chairman, but felt that the Council should strike a balance between increasing council tax, protecting services, and maintaining a prudent level of contingency and top up to reserves.

Councillor Tony Armstrong joined the meeting at this point.

Councillor Adam proposed an amendment that the council tax be increased by 7.5% or £1.06 per month at Council Band A next year, as referenced in Option 4 the report. This was seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson.

A vote took place on the amendment with the following results:

For: 9 Against: 7

The amendment was carried.

A vote then took place on the substantive motion with the following results:

For: 11 Against: 0

The substantive motion was carried by majority decision.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that

- a) the report be received;
- b) the Liberal Democrat Group savings proposals and officer's responses be received;
- c) the final 2023/24 Revenue Budget and Precept be prepared on the basis of a maximum increase in the Town Council Tax of 7.5% for approval by Policy and Resources in January;
- d) officers are authorised to action those previously agreed savings that can be implemented ahead of the new financial year.

83. PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE VACANCY

It was requested that Councillor Phillip Hawkins be appointed to the vacancy on Personnel Sub Committee.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) Councillor Phillip Hawkins be appointed to the vacancy on the Personnel Sub-Committee

84. WORKING GROUP VACANCIES

It was requested that Councillor Arun Chandran be appointed to the vacancy on the Service Review Working Group and,

that Councillor Phillip Hawkins be appointed to the vacancy on the Asset Management Working Group.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) Councillor Arun Chandran be appointed to the vacancy on the Service Review Working Group.
- ii) Councillor Phillip Hawkins be appointed to the vacancy on the Asset Management Working Group.

CHAIRMAN.