

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee of Sandy Town Council which was held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 20th November 2023 commencing at 6.00pm.

Present: Cllrs A Effiong, J Hewitt, A Lock, R Lock, C Osborne (Chair), M Pettitt, M Scott and P Sharman.

Absent: Cllr S Baker

In attendance: Mrs. N Sewell (Clerk), Mr. Ian Reed (Deputy Clerk), Cllr N Aldis and Mr. Derek Kemp from DCK Accounting Solutions Ltd (by online link)

	Actions
<p>1 Apologies for Absence (67-2023/24) Apologies were received from Cllr Baker</p>	Admin
<p>2 Declarations of Interest (68-2023/24)</p> <p>i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest - None ii) Non-disclosable Pecuniary Interest - None iii) Dispensations – None</p>	
<p>3 2024/25 Budget Review (69-2023/24) Members received an updated detailed budget report for 2024/25 which included notes from Mr. Kemp of DCK Accounting Solutions, who joined the meeting via a Zoom link to answer Members' questions.</p>	
<p>Some questions had been submitted to Mr. Kemp prior to the meeting, these are listed below alongside his responses:</p>	
<p>Questions</p>	
<p>1) Initially you suggested we do take out a Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan for the cemetery extension. We believe your thinking is that we may not now need to do this as funds could be taken from Rolling Capital. Please can you advise further? The costs of this have been estimated at £276,777.44 and include a 10% contingency. £245,277.44 is for the landscaping work which we hoped would start early next year. £31,500 is for the project management. Part of this will be paid this year to CDS to start off this next phase of the project (£13,950.00)</p> <p>2) How do you believe STC should best look to responsibly fund the remainder of the cemetery project while balancing the probable need to raise some additional capital (a loan) to</p>	

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retain sufficient capital to manage adequately the electorates' expectations elsewhere; not to neglect and build up an unmanageable backlog of project work and at the same time to try to keep precept increases over the coming few years at tolerable levels?

Answer to Questions 1&2: I am still recommending the taking out of a PWLB Loan. I am, however, advising that the Council increases its Rolling Capital Fund (RCP) Provision back to the previously recommended £51,300. If it does so, it does not need to additionally budget for the loan costs because the loan costs can be funded by diverting part of the RCP Funding. E.g., £250K borrowed over 20 years would cost £20,092 per annum, over 25 years would cost £18,223. This would still leave an increase of more than £30K p.a. in the RCP for other Capital Projects, but by so doing consultation on the loan would not be required because it is not (directly) adding the loan costs to the Precept demand. (Advice given as per the requirements set out by PWLB).

3) Can local councils be "capped"?

Answer: Local Councils are not (currently) subject to capping.

4) If there is an overspend on this year's precept where do the funds come from? Will the overspend be carried forward?

Answer: Overspends, by definition, come from General Reserve, unless otherwise decided.

5) As you are proposing that the estimated underspend of £29,799 from this year goes into capital, could the revenue contribution of £51,300 in 2024/25 be reduced by this amount?

Answer: In view of my above answers, my recommendation is NOT to reduce the £51,300.

6) Why have you only estimated a 5% rate rise for salaries in 2024/25?

Answer: With underlying inflation running at over 10%, the Unions nevertheless accepted a pay increase of between 9.41% (SCP 2) and 3.88% SCP 44 and above. With inflation predicted (and actually) dropping to below 5%, I believe a provision for 2024/25 of 5% is adequate.

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Members went through the 2024/25 budget review report line by line.

RESOLVED that the following adjustments be made:

401

4030 increase Recruitment Advertising to £800

402

1003 reduce Tourism Income to zero

4012 reduce water rates to £600

4020 reduce miscellaneous establishment costs to £1,000

4056 Legal Expenses increase to £4,500

403

4012 reduce water rates to £275

4042 reduce Equipment/Vehicle maintenance to £4,500

4045 reduce Arboriculture to £4,000

406

1226 suggest increase Burial/Memorial Income by 16% for 2024/25- which will be confirmed when the scale of charges is agreed.

408

1238 Reduce other income Car Park to zero

4029 Lamppost Banners increase to £1,425

4100 increase CCTV to £3,717

409

4012 increase water rates to £1,750

500

4036 Property Maintenance/Security reduce to £1,000

4037 Ground Maintenance increase to £5,000

501

4060 Other professional fees reduce to £9,500

502

4703 – Sandy Green Wheel – query raised as to whether the £2,000 grant would continue – decision deferred to CS&E

509

4402 Community Christmas Event increase to £6,000.

4 Minutes of Previous Meeting (70-2023/24)

RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the meeting of Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on Monday 23rd October 2023 and to approve them as a correct record of proceedings.

5 Public Participation Session (71-2023/24)

No members of the public were present. A query had been submitted to the Chairman from a resident regarding the duplication of payments, which was addressed under Item 6iii.

6 Financial Reports (71-2023/24)

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i) Members considered the balance sheet and detailed financial report showing income and expenditure against the revenue budget ending 31st October 2023. The Chairman took Members through the report page by page.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ii) Members received and considered a budget report from the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED to note the report.

iii) Members scrutinised a schedule of payments for October 2023.

RESOLVED to approve the list of payments.

A query had been raised by a resident in regard to a duplicate payment of £550 to Martin Whyte for Cricket Wicket renovations. The Chairman was able to report that the Financial Administrator had already found the error, and undertaken action to secure the refund. The cause of the error had been investigated and extra checks implemented to ensure that the error was not repeated.

Town Clerk/Financial Admin

v) Bank reconciliations and statements.

RESOLVED that the Chair of Policy, Finance and Resources check and approve the bank reconciliations and statements.

7 2024/25 Capital Expenditure (72-2023/24)

i) Members received an updated report from the Clerk setting out expected Capital Expenditure for 2024/25 with an estimated underspend calculation in 2023/24.

RESOLVED that the following projects and associated costs be included in the 2024/25 budget:

- Cemetery Extension Project – Phase Two Landscaping (total cost estimated at £276,777.48). Budget provision for 2024/25 has yet to be determined and is likely to be covered by Public Works Loan Board Loan and spread across several years (see notes in Item 3 minute **69-2023/24**).
- Bedford Road Replacement Swings - £15,400
- Replacement CCTV - £22,214.49 plus ongoing annual cost of £3,717
- Replacement Befco mower attachment – or similar model (costs to be confirmed)
- Website upgrade- £12,500
- Repairs to Churchyard Wall (costs to be confirmed)

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- Car Park resurfacing and repairs – to be looked at after March 2024 following works to install EV Charging Points
- Lamppost timer replacement – estimated £2,000.

Members also noted the need for an unplanned contingency fund estimated at £15,000 to cover the cost of unexpected works.

ii) Budget recommendations from the Community Services and Environment Committee were considered:

RESOLVED to

- Include a £475 addition for banner installation (to cover Summer, Remembrance and D Day 80TH Anniversary - Union Flags)
- Pitch Improvement at Sunderland Road Recreation £4,000 grant to be pursued through the Football Foundation
- Line marking robot of £500 per season for Sunderland Road Football pitches
- Maintenance of former Sandy Enhancement Group gardens at £2,500 – Deputy Clerk to investigate possible income from biodiversity project
- Skatepark soft pour surfacing for deteriorating grass surface £9,000 – CS&E Committee to be asked to further clarify the cost.
- Tree care – to fund after care (costs to be determined).

The Committee also highlighted the following events for budget consideration but did not offer any cost estimates as the events were still to be fully discussed:

- 2 x Seasonal Markets (Spring and Autumn)
- 80th Anniversary of D Day Landings (6th June 2024)
- Big Lunch (tbc)
- Skate Park Anniversary (September)
- Remembrance Sunday Parade (10th November 2024)
- Christmas Lights 2024 (1st December 2024)
- St Swithun's Tree Festival 2024

Costs for the above would be submitted ready for PF&R's January meeting.

8 Cemetery Working Group Minutes (73-2023/24)

Members received the Minutes from the Cemetery Working Group meeting held on 13th November 2023.

RESOLVED to note the Minutes. Members also requested that tenders for the project collected by CDS be opened in the presence of the Working Group. Cllr Scott formerly stood down as Chairman of the working group airing frustrations with delays in the progression of the project, difficulty working with the assigned consultant i.e., not receiving information from them when promised, and felt that they

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were not delivering what had been agreed. A new chairman would be appointed at the next Working Group meeting.

9 Spending under delegated authority (74-2023/24)

Members were asked to note the following payments made under delegated authority:

- £82.44 for two A4 lockable poster cases
- £94.50 for 5 x 1.8 metre cable covers
- £23.98 for PC speakers
- £35.99 for a 50-metre extension cable
- £5,540 for repairs to flatbed truck including tipper
- £234.80 for barrier hire
- £97.14 for Printed Raffle Tickets
- £55 for replacement Defib Pads
- £90 to transport heras fencing from Depot to Scout Hut
- £92 for binding of AOC monograph
- £57 for Toyota Flatbed MOT
- £92 for SJS Annual Service Contract (irrigation)
- £700 for tractor training for two Members of Staff
- £728 for replacement fuel tank on Toyota vehicle (AK12 WLJ)
- £399 for recruitment advert Civic Officer role
- £135 hire of PA equipment for Remembrance Sunday Event
- £65.90 replacement Union Flag for Council Office.

Total £8,671.35

RESOLVED to note the payments.

10 Sum Up for Events (75-2023/24)

Members received a request for the Town Council to use a Sum Up machine to take card payments at the Christmas Lights Switch On Event and for other payments that come through the office.

RESOLVED to agree the use of a Sum Up card reader and to amend Financial Regulations accordingly.

Town Clerk

11 Action Plan (76-2023/24)

Members received an updated Action Plan.

RESOLVED to note the Action Plan with the following amends, that the date of agreement for the Scale of Charges be amended to 15th January 2024 to reflect the new date for PF&R's January meeting.

Town Clerk

12 Grant Application (77-2023/24)

Members were asked to consider a grant application from the Veg Box Donation Scheme for £750 to pay towards expenses to put together Veg Boxes for residents in Sandy affected by food poverty.

RESOLVED to give a grant of £600 to the scheme.

Town Clerk

13 Council Office Carpet Cleaning (78-2023/24)

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Members were asked to consider a report and quotes from the Deputy Clerk regarding the cleaning of carpets throughout the offices and Council Chamber at 10, Cambridge Road.

RESOLVED that the carpets should be cleaned and to accept the quote from Company A as the best value for money.

Deputy Clerk

14 Chairman's Items (79-2023/24)

There were none.

15 Date of next meeting (80-2023/24)

Monday 15th January 2024

Meeting ended at 20.19