



MINUTES FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE meeting held 15th January 2021 at 10am by Zoom

FIN REP 01.21

Present – Cllr Betts, Cllr Bradbury, Cllr Flunder, Cllr Jordan and Cllr Ladd.

Also, present – Town Clerk and 1 member of the public.

1. **Apologies:** To receive apologies for absence.
There were no apologies for absence.
2. **Declarations of interest:**
 - a) To receive any declarations of Personal Interest regarding the agenda. Nil
 - b) To receive any declarations of Pecuniary Interest regarding the agenda. Nil.
 - c) To receive any request for dispensations regarding the agenda. Nil.
 - d) To receive details of any lobbying to members. Nil.

Matters from the public

The purpose of the meeting is for Councillors to discuss Town Council business and whilst the attendance of electors is welcomed, they are not allowed to join in the discussions of the Councillors.

During each meeting the Council will adjourn for a period for public questions. During this time, electors can put questions to the Chairman regarding matters on the agenda. Where possible, the Chairman will respond but the matter may have to be deferred and placed on a later month's agenda for discussion.

A member of the public asked the following: a) whether the project management contract for Station Road redevelopment has been signed and agreed, b) has the budget for the Station Road redevelopment build been set, and c) has a bid been made for the police station site.

3. **Minutes of the last meeting REP 12.2020 –**

The minutes of the REP 12.2020 meeting were approved and signed.

4. **Management accounts 2020/2021**

The management accounts to end December 2020 were presented by the RFO and discussed on a line-by-line basis with analysis against budget code for each individual account code. The actual spend for each account code was considered against agreed Covid revised budget.

Discussions relating to the management accounts.

Town Hall running costs includes the one-off purchase of 2 laptops to enable Councillor inclusivity in online meetings.

Funding received for professional fees/feasibility study on Boating Lake and funding applications had now been spent on the initial application to Heritage Lottery Funders.

Solicitors provision –to be reviewed Jan 2021 together with a revised residential property advisor provision.

Town manager – ESC has advised that the revenue funding for the role cannot be decoupled from the Station Road Redevelopment capital funding. To enable both revenue and capital funding to be released there needs to be certainty that the capital project is going ahead in accordance with the agreement from the funders, which ESC determine as being when the capital build commences.

Other Fees relating to Station Yard redevelopment are presently being paid by STC including the necessary contamination research and project management fees. Reclaim from the grant funding will be as above.

Play areas – From Rospa report Klondyke skate area needs resurfacing at cost of £2500– materials purchased.

N plan Reg 14 – fees for professional advice and consultation/ printing etc £1937.

Property repair/maintenance works – an update was provided regarding the works taking place.

Software and support include assistance with improving practices for remote working £4366.

Audit fees have now all been paid – budget allocation ££800 to be transferred to grounds maintenance.

Bank charges - the bank has reclassified accounts and the Town Council is now classed as a business and business charges will therefore apply.

Cil expenses – costs of cycle shed provision at rear of Town Hall to be allocated once invoice received.

Kilcock Toilets – are presently closed due to vandalism. Costs of repair being ascertained.

Town Pump – repairs executed on one of posts which had been damaged by a reversing vehicle

Asset purchases include the litter picking equipment part funded by ESC ward Cllr contribution.

Highways budget – will be rolled forward and allocated as part of the Sustainable Transport priority projects for 2021.22

Memorial seat – new one purchased and installed on Electricity Green.

Marshes – emergency drainage works this week authorised by Chair of L and E and Town Clerk due to flooding on the road to the harbour (near the Golf Club).

After full discussion, there were no matters of concern to highlight noted by the Finance cttee within the 9-month accounts relating to expenditure.

With regards to income due, the cttee noted that the rental income has exceeded the revised Covid 19 budget with tenants having received all of the appropriate government Covid grant aid and having had a very successful trading period once open.

Grants have been received from ESC for setting up the Town App £7k, and a Business Association £3k, together with a further £1,000 for the Events ticketing platform.

Business rate relief has been allocated to the Town Hall - £10k. Open air cinema ticket monies have been received £4228.

Market is now closed as part of the Covid regulations apart from essentials – most of the Southwold traders do not operate in January anyway. Income to date £5329.

Insurance contributions are being received from tenants.

CIL total for 2020/21 has now been received - £8993.

Kilcock toilets – income has been reduced due to the free provision of the toilets during the summer – income for July/Aug/Sept 2019 to be analysed to quantify potential income loss.

Capital sale income of £15500 has been received for the shuttle bus.

Income to the end Nov 2020 is £368,359 against Covid Budget of £294,500– expenditure £244,700 against Covid budget of £366,050.

The month end management accounts and bank reconciliations for December 2020 were reviewed and approved by the Chair of the cttee and signed off as required.

With regards to the queries relating to the contract for Station Rd project mgt – the payments are being made in accordance with the contract specifications and works not included within the

scoping will require individual consideration. The project mgrs. are reporting to the Project Board on a monthly basis - any queries outstanding from the finance cttee to be discussed directly with them.

With regards to query about police station site – Town Council minutes 21st December 2020 refer.

With regards to query about Station Road redevelopment budget – see Budget below.

5. **Other Finance matters**

- *Precept deadline and tax base – timescales*

Budget 2021/ 22

Revenue and Capital budgets are being finalised for 2021.22. All requests from committees have been received and included within the budget assessment. Each cttee has set itself ambitious priority projects for 2021.22 and the budget forecast will assist with the delivery of each of these which in turn will enable positive outcomes to be achieved.

The Town Clerk detailed the projects that each cttee had put forward which include the following.

Revenue Budget

- Planning – improving councillor training and having a provision to take professional advice for complex planning applications.
- Sustainable Transport – CCTV around the Town, vehicle charging points, feasibility study for whole town speed limit, improvements to parking and signage. See previous finance minutes below re CCTV project
'Discussion re the vandalism at the Kilcock Toilets and the suggestion by the PCSO of placing CCTV in this location – and ideally other locations around the town including the Market Place.
The PCSO has advised that the camera on Mights Bridge is of significant benefit to the police as CCTV evidence is very often required to ascertain offences and offenders, and that he would be pleased to assist in any project of enhancing provision of CCTV in the town.
Members felt it would certainly be worth researching the provision of CCTV further – with Beccles, Bungay and Kessingland noted as areas where such schemes had recently been put into place'.
- Town Manager and PCSO – employment group are considering these roles and will come back with recommendations.
- Leisure and Environment – Ferry Road garden, works from the marshes report from Suffolk wildlife, marshes maintenance works, rewilding, tree planting, skatepark maintenance, electricity green mural renovation, defib in phone kiosk along Pier Ave, other play area repairs, town maintenance and environmental works, footpath maintenance,
- Town Council – consideration of divestment of portfolio, consideration of harbour/campsite, consideration of property management systems.
- Neighbourhood Plan – completion of the N Plan
- Communication group- improving remote working outputs, council modernisation programme and stakeholder communications.

Capital Refurbishments and improvements – Capital Budget.

- Landlords – repairs and maintenance programme, including additional funds on top of the application for funding to provide water supply back to Boating Lake lagoon.

Additional projects including the redevelopment of Station Yard, and additional land purchases

These would need to be funded through alternative means including potentially through the diversification of the existing property portfolio.

In order to include all of the projects above in the forward planning, existing reserves will need to be utilised to cover the budget deficits on both the Revenue and Capital projects/ budgets.

Discussion about the deficit - the impact of Covid on the budget for 21.22 is being assessed.

Precept 2021.22

Discussion about implications of the projects/budget as above on precept and use of reserves and use of alternate funding sources.

Letter from ESC has been received setting out the provisional tax base and the dates for setting precept. Last date for advising ESC of precept for 2021/22 is 31st January 2021. Town Council to note.

Tax base confirmed by ESC letter of 6th January 2021.

To achieve same precept as last year i.e., £120k, due to eligible households reducing those paying would see an increase of 1.72% on their statements.

To levy same charge as last year - £109.59 per household (£2.10 per week) - a total income of £117,962.68 will be received. The shortfall will be offset by a payment of £482 from ESC. Precept shortfall would therefore be £1556 for the Town Council.

It is suggested that the Town Council sets a 0% change in precept for 2021.22 and request from ESC a precept of £117,962.68.

Deficit in funding to be covered by reserves. (However, with interest rates presently low – the finance cttee will also consider other funding opportunities including loans for capital repairs).

The budget document will continue to be a working document.

Recommendations

***Feasibility Cost Plan 1 Strickland Place* - See previous council minutes re dividing the property into 2 smaller units.**

NPS advise that the cost of a feasibility study on the cost of conversion, versus the potential income from rent for will be £2175 plus vat. It is recommended that the Town council proceed with the feasibility study in order to consider the appropriate way forward on this property.

Property portfolio

Following full discussion, it was suggested that as it is many years since a full valuation has been carried out on the property portfolio other than for insurance purposes, a market valuation be undertaken of the council property portfolio.

6. Governance /policies to complete/ review

Nil

7. Date of next meeting - To be confirmed.

Exclusion of Public and Press: Pursuant to section 1 (2) of the Public Bodied (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 it was unanimously resolved that, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press leave the meeting during consideration of the following.

Nil

Chair.....

Dated

DRAFT