

Witham Town Council

Town Hall
Newland Street
Witham
CM8 2FE



Tel: 01376 520627
Fax: 01376 502674
Email: townclerk@witham.gov.uk
Website: www.witham.gov.uk

MINUTES

Meeting of: **Estimates Sub-Committee**

Date: **Monday, 8th January 2018**

Present: Councillors M.C.M. Lager (Chairman)
J.C. Goodman
T.A. Pleasance

Also in attendance:

Councillors P. Horner
Mrs J.M. Money
W.J. Rose
Mrs M. Squire (Town Clerk)
Mrs G. Kennedy (Committee Clerk)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs J. Williams and R Williams.

1. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

2. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No member of the press or public were present.

3. TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGY

The Chairman spoke of the need to focus on the way forward over the next 3 years and the importance of -

- a) planning the budget on a sustainable basis for future years.
- b) establishing key strategic objectives and targets given the testing financial environment e.g. supporting crime prevention measures.

He explained that unless revenue can be raised or less spent by the Council, the deficit will continue to increase which is clearly unsustainable. He said that there is little room to manoeuvre as services will need to be cut or tax increased.

He referred to the extract from the recent District Council's financial strategy report which was presented to its Council Meeting on 11th December 2017 and detailed the anticipated growth in the tax base and the Government's stance regarding Town and Parish Council's need to demonstrate restraint in setting precept increases. The current Band D equivalent is £56.70 and he proposed a £5.00 increase which would raise an additional £40,000 to help maintain a sustainable level of general reserves.

Members discussed the proposal and the need to achieve a balance without reducing services.

The Town Clerk advised that a 2% cap on Parish and Town Council tax increase had been mooted but not yet imposed.¹

Members then had a discussion about ways to generate income and it was suggested that the Revenue Generation Task and Finish Group should meet again and look at the opportunities to reduce the gap in the Town Council's finances.

The Chairman therefore proposed –

- to balance finances by obtaining extra revenue from the precept,
- for the Revenue Generation Task and Finish Group to meet,
- to prioritise existing activities.

The Chairman said it would help to review again what the Committees plan to do and produce an outcome for each item to be considered by the Town Council at its Budget Meeting on 23rd January 2018.

4. ESTIMATES 2018/2019 and for the following two years

(i) Administration/Central Services

Members were asked to consider and approve the budget for Administration/Central Services Expenditure.

¹ The Government intends to defer the setting of referendum principles for town and parish council for 3 years.

Members suggested that it was unlikely that £1,500 would be raised through Sundry Receipts, and that the budgets for Sundry Expenses and Audit & Legal were too high. It was suggested that if there is unexpected expenditure the General Reserves are available for any shortfall.

Therefore

- reduce Sundry receipts by £1000 to £500
- reduce Sundry Expenses by £1500 to £1500
- reduce Audit and Legal by £1000 to £2000

RECOMMENDED TO TOWN COUNCIL That the budget for Central Services for 2018/2019 be accepted, and the forecasts for the following two years be noted as–

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
<u>Expenditure</u>			
Salaries, Tax, NI (Office)	£144,200	£148,526	£152,982
Pensions	£30,000	£31,350	£32,000
Town Hall	£30,500	£31,000	£31,500
Gas	£3,296	£3,395	£3,497
Electricity	£3,502	£3,607	£3,715
Repairs and Renewals	£2,000	£2,050	£2,100
Travel Expenses	£600	£600	£600
Photocopying	£2,060	£2,121	£2,186
Postage	£1,800	£1,900	£2,000
Stationery	£1,600	£1,650	£1,700
Office Equipment	£3,914	£4,031	£4,152
Website	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000
Telephone/fax	£3,090	£3,183	£3,278
Insurance	£8,500	£8,755	£9,018
Sundry Expenses	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500
Audit and Legal	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000
Affiliation Fees	£3,000	£3,050	£3,100
Members – Conferences & Training	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500
Staff – Conferences & Training	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500
Payroll Charges	£670	£690	£711
Petty Cash	£620	£650	£680
<u>Total Expenditure</u>	<u>£247,852</u>	<u>£255,058</u>	<u>£261,719</u>
<u>Income</u>			
Sundry Receipts	£500	£500	£500
Car Park Licence Receipt	£8,783	£8,783	£8,783
<u>Total Income</u>	<u>£9,283</u>	<u>£9,283</u>	<u>£9,283</u>
<u>Net Total</u>	<u>£238,569</u>	<u>£245,775</u>	<u>£252,436</u>

Proportioned across Committees -NET

Community Committee (40%)	£95,428	£98,310	£100,974
Environment Committee (40%)	£95,428	£98,310	£100,974
Policy & Resources Committee (20%)	£47,713	£49,155	£50,488

(ii) **Committee Bids**

Members then considered bids made by Committees.

Community Committee

Members commented on the drop in income from the Information Centre, with the lower commission earned from ticket sales and lower footfall. Also, the small number of grant applications received to date.

The Town Clerk said that at present only the Witham Carnival Association had applied for grant funding for 2018. Members discussed imposing a rigid deadline for grant aid applications and to obtain more information from the Citizen Advice regarding the Money Advice Service. It was agreed to reduce the grant aid budget to £12,000.

Members then discussed the Puppet Festival and whether the Town Council should retain the £17,000 limit and use its reserves to make up the difference.

The Town Clerk proposed to use the litter bin budget on purchasing two new bins each year for the town centre to replace ones that are beyond just painting.

The Town Clerk explained that there would be a £1,000 increase in the CCTV expenditure this year but hopefully this would reduce in future years, when a fibre optic link is established. Therefore, increase CCTV by £1000 to £16,965

RECOMMENDED TO TOWN COUNCIL That the budget for the Community Committee for 2018/2019 be accepted and the forecast for the following two years be noted as –

<u>Expenditure</u>	2018/19	2019/2020	2020/2021
Town Clock	0	£800	0
Bus Shelters	£500	£500	£500
Litter Bins	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000
Christmas Decorations	£7,210	£7,426	£7,650
Dickensian Event	£320	£320	£320
Information Sales Expense	£73,000	£76,500	£80,400
Information Centre	£32,550	£34,178	£35,890
Community Support	£12,150	£12,515	£12,890
CCTV	£16,965	£16,445	£16,937
Community Grant Aid	£12,000	£12,000	£12,000
Citizens Advice	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000

Other Support and Youth Engagement	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000
Puppet Festival	£24,684	£25,178	£25,681
Community Day	£1,050	£1,050	£1,050
World War 1 Commemorations	£500	£500	0
NET Administration/Central Services	£95,428	£98,310	£100,974
<u>Total Expenditure</u>	<u>£290,357</u>	<u>£299,722</u>	<u>£308,292</u>
<u>Income</u>			
Information Sales Receipts	£80,000	£84,000	£88,200
Dickensian Event	£320	£320	£320
Puppet Festival	£5,200	£5,400	£5,600
<u>Total Income</u>	<u>£85,520</u>	<u>£89,720</u>	<u>£94,120</u>
<u>Net Total Community Committee</u>	<u>£204,837</u>	<u>£210,002</u>	<u>£214,172</u>

Environment Committee

The Town Clerk said that traditionally Pensions for the Open Spaces Team was included as a separate item, whilst other elements such as salaries, tax and National Insurance were included in the general Open Spaces costs.

Pensions, salaries and Tax & NI would now be joined to form a new budget line. This would make it easier to ascertain all other Open Spaces expenditure.

Members considered that as the Period Garden is now closed the budget should be zero as any work needed could be financed through General Reserves.

Members considered that the Town Council lights should be transferred to the County Council or gradually replaced with LED bulbs.

RECOMMENDED TO TOWN COUNCIL That the budget for the Environment Committee for 2018/2019 be accepted and the forecasts for the following two years be noted as –

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
<u>Expenditure</u>			
Manual Equipment	£8,500	£8,755	£9,018
Lighting of Footpaths	£6,500	£6,500	£6,695
Period Garden	0	0	0
Commemorative Trees	£800	£800	£800
Trees	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000
Open Spaces Salaries/Pensions/Tax/NI	£93,525	£96,063	£98,593
Open Spaces	£12,415	£13,313	£13,721
River Walk Projects	£20,000	£10,000	£10,000
Lavatories – Town Park	£9,000	£9,000	£9,270
Floral Displays	£11,500	£11,948	£12,306

Dog Bins	£600	£600	£600
Lengthsman Scheme	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000
Administration/Central Services	£95,428	£98,310	£100,974
<u>Total Expenditure</u>	<u>£261,268</u>	<u>£258,289</u>	<u>£264,977</u>
<u>Income</u>			
Commemorative Trees	£800	£800	£800
<u>Total Income</u>	<u>£800</u>	<u>£800</u>	<u>£800</u>
<u>Net Total Environment Committee</u>	<u>£260,468</u>	<u>£257,489</u>	<u>£264,177</u>

Policy and Resources Committee

Members agreed the Policy and Resources Committee budget.

The Mayor's Allowance was reduced by £1,000 to £1,500.

RECOMMENDED TO TOWN COUNCIL That the budget for the Policy and Resources Committee for 2018/2019 be accepted and the forecasts for following two years be accepted as –

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
<u>Expenditure</u>			
Mayors Gift Fund	£100	£100	£100
Civic Receptions	£500	£500	£500
Christmas Expenses	£2,123	£2,185	£2,251
Mayor's Allowance	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500
Newsletter and Publications	£8,500	£8,500	£8,500
Joint working with ECC/BDC/Parishes	£500	£500	£500
Neighbourhood/Town Plan	£500	£500	£500
Administration/Central Services	£47,713	£49,155	£50,488
<u>Total Expenditure</u>	<u>£61,436</u>	<u>£62,940</u>	<u>£64,339</u>
<u>Income</u>			
Hall Hire Receipts	£8,500	£9,000	£9,500
Bank/Investment Income	£2,800	£2,800	£2,800
<u>Total Income</u>	<u>£11,300</u>	<u>£11,800</u>	<u>£12,300</u>
<u>Net Total Policy & Resources Committee</u>	<u>£50,136</u>	<u>£51,140</u>	<u>£52,039</u>

(iii) **Earmarked Reserves**

Members were asked to approve transfer of reserves to and from the General Fund.

EARMARKED FUNDS AT THE END OF YEAR

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
<u>Environment</u>			
Bandstand	£4,000	£4,000	£4,000
Vehicle Replacement Fund	£11,600	£15,900	£20,200
Equipment Replacement Fund	£13,000	£15,000	£17,000
<u>Sub Total</u>	<u>£28,600</u>	<u>£34,900</u>	<u>£41,200</u>
<u>Community Committee</u>			
CCTV	£6,000	£12,000	£18,000
Puppet Festival	£1,800	£800	0
Community Day	£423	£423	£423
<u>Sub Total</u>	<u>£8,223</u>	<u>£13,223</u>	<u>£18,423</u>
<u>Policy and Resources Committee</u>			
Major Repairs & Renewals	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Members' Allowances	£3,200	£3,200	£3,200
Election Expenses	£13,050	£3,350	£6,650
<u>Sub Total</u>	<u>£31,250</u>	<u>£21,550</u>	<u>£24,850</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>£68,073</u>	<u>£69,673</u>	<u>£84,473</u>

EARMARKED FUNDS SPENT

<u>Community Committee</u>			
CCTV and Community Safety	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
<u>Policy and Resources Committee</u>			
Election Expenses	0	£13,000	0
Town Hall Development	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
<u>Sub Total</u>	<u>£10,000</u>	<u>£23,000</u>	<u>£10,000</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>£20,000</u>	<u>£33,000</u>	<u>£20,000</u>

EARMARKED FUND TRANSFERS

<u>Environment Committee</u>			
Vehicle Replacement Fund	£4,300	£4,300	£4,300
Equipment Replacement Fund	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000

<u>Sub Total</u>	<u>£6,300</u>	<u>£6,300</u>	<u>£6,300</u>
<u>Community Committee</u>			
CCTV and Community Safety	£16,000	£16,000	£16,000
Puppet Festival	- £1,161	-£1,000	- 800
<u>Sub Total</u>	<u>£14,839</u>	<u>£15,000</u>	<u>£15,200</u>
<u>Policy and Resources Committee</u>			
Election Expenses	£3,300	£3,300	£3,300
Town Hall Development	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
<u>Sub Total</u>	<u>£13,300</u>	<u>£13,300</u>	<u>£13,300</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>£34,439</u>	<u>£34,600</u>	<u>£34,800</u>

(iv) **Puppet Festival**

The updated schedule was received and approved.

The Town Clerk explained that sponsorship from New River Retail (Newlands Centre) had just been received but sponsorship from the Grove Centre's owners was still awaited.

In view of the time it was resolved to suspend Standing Orders.

RESOLVED That to allow business to continue Standing Order 4(a) be suspended.

RESOLVED That the updated schedule be received and approved.

5. **PRECEPT 2018/2019**

(a) **Precept Calculation**

The Precept Calculation figures received were based initially on a hypothetical 2% increase.

(b) **Financial forecasts from the Chairman**

The Chairman recommended that there should be a £5 increase at Band D which would give stability to the Town Council to continue providing services.

Updated figures where necessary, based on this revised basis and agreed at this Estimates Sub Committee would be brought to the next Town Council Meeting on 23rd January 2018 for review and approval.

RECOMMENDED TO TOWN COUNCIL That the Precept for 2018/2019 be increased by the equivalent of a £5 increase to £61.70 at Band D and at an amount of £500,776 be approved.

(c) **How your tax is spent projections**

The figures were agreed and the Town Clerk indicated that there would be some revisions made, based on the discussions and conclusions made, both this Estimates Sub Committee Meeting and the subsequent Town Council Meeting on 23rd January 2018.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.40 p.m.

Councillor M.C.M. Lager
Chairman

MS/GK/16.1.2018