

# Witham Town Council

Town Hall  
Newland Street  
Witham  
CM8 2FE



Tel: 01376 520627  
Fax: 01376 502674  
Email: [townclerk@witham.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@witham.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.witham.gov.uk](http://www.witham.gov.uk)

## MINUTES

Meeting of: **Estimates Sub-Committee**

Date: **Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016**

Present: Councillors M.C.M. Lager (Chairman)  
J.C. Goodman  
R. Williams  
M. Squire (Town Clerk)  
Mrs G. Kennedy (Committee Clerk)

### APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. Horner and W.J. Rose.

### 1. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

### 2. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the press or public present.

### 3. ESTIMATES 2016/2017

#### (i) Administration/Central Services

The budget for Administration/Central Services Expenditure was received.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that the Administration/Central Services budget is split 40%, 40% and 20% between Community, Environment and Policy and Resources Committees. He explained the difficulty in estimating expenditure as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 as unexpected expense could greatly affect the budget predictions.

**RECOMMENDED** That the following amounts be approved for the Administration/Central Services for 2016/2017 –

**Expenditure**

Salaries, Tax, National Insurance	-	£139,300
Pensions	-	£26,000
Payroll Charges	-	£600
Town Hall	-	£30,000
Gas	-	£3,200
Electricity	-	£3,400
Repairs and renewals	-	£2,000
Travel Expenses	-	£600
Photocopying	-	£2,000
Postage	-	£2,000
Stationery	-	£1,600
Office equipment	-	£3,800
Website	-	£2,000
Telephone/fax	-	£3,000
Insurance	-	£11,000
Sundry Expenses	-	£3,000
Audit & Legal	-	£3,000
Affiliation fees	-	£3,000
Members – Conferences & Training	-	£1,200
Staff – Conferences & Training	-	£1,200
Petty cash	-	£600
<b><u>Total Expenditure</u></b>	-	<b><u>£242,500</u></b>

Proportioned across Committees

Community Committee (40%)	-	£97,000
Environment Committee (40%)	-	£97,000
Policy and Resources Committee (20%)	-	£48,500

**Income**

Sundry Receipts	-	£3,000
Car Park Licence	-	£9,500

**Total Income** - **£12,500**

Proportioned across Committees

Community Committee (40%)	-	£5,000
Environment Committee (40%)	-	£5,000
Policy and Resources Committee (20%)	-	£2,500

(ii) **Committee Bids**

Estimate bids were received from the Committees.

Members recognised that the decrease in the Localism Fund will badly affect the Town Council's income and the opportunity to carry forward planned projects. They were mindful that over the next three years the District Council proposed to reduce Localism Fund payment to zero and that pre-emptive action ought to be considered now.

**Community Committee**

Members agreed to recommend the proposed Community Committee budget to Town Council.

**RECOMMENDED** That the following budget be set for the Community Committee for 2016/2017 –

**Expenditure**

Town Clock	-	£800
Bus Shelters/Seats	-	£500
Litter Bins	-	£500
Christmas Decorations	-	£9,000
Christmas Dickensian Events	-	£350
Information Sales Expense	-	£114,000
Information Centre	-	£31,000
Community Grant Aid	-	£22,500
Citizens Advice Bureau	-	£10,000
Other Community Support & Youth Engagement	-	£5,000
Puppet Festival	-	£25,000
Community Support	-	£9,700
World War One Commemoration	-	£1,000
Community Day	-	£1,500
Administration/Central Services	-	£97,000
<b><u>Total Expenditure</u></b>	-	<b><u>£327,850</u></b>

**Income**

Christmas Dickensian Event	-	£350
Information Sales Income	-	£130,000
Puppet Festival	-	£7,000
Administration/Central Services	-	£5,000
<b><u>Total Income</u></b>	-	<b><u>£142,350</u></b>

### **Environment Committee**

The Town Clerk highlighted some minor changes. A suggestion was made that it might be easier to manage just one budget to cover repairs rather than individual budgets.

**RECOMMENDED** That the following budget be set for the Environment Committee for 2016/2017 –

#### **Expenditure**

Pensions	-	£22,000
Manual Equipment	-	£10,000
Lighting of Footpaths	-	£6,500
Period Garden	-	£2,300
Trees/Commemorative/Memorial	-	£1,000
CCTV	-	£15,500
Open Spaces	-	£80,000
River Walk Projects	-	£10,000
Toilet Block – Town Park	-	£9,000
Dog Bins	-	£600
Witham in Bloom Floral Displays	-	£10,000
Witham Gateways	-	£3,000
Local Conservation Listings	-	£1,000
Accommodation	-	£10,000
Administration/Central Services	-	£97,000
<b><u>Total Expenditure</u></b>	-	<b><u>£277,900</u></b>

#### **Income**

Trees/Commemorative/Memorial	-	£800
Administration/Central Services	-	£5,000
<b><u>Total Income</u></b>	-	<b><u>£5,800</u></b>

### **Policy and Resources Committee**

The Chairman said that the budget for Town/Neighbourhood/Local Plans would cover proposed investigation of town centre regeneration.

**RECOMMENDED** That the following budget be set for the Policy and Resources Committee for 2016/2017 –

#### **Expenditure**

Mayor's Fund Gift Allowance	-	£100
Civic Receptions/International Relations	-	£1,000
Christmas Expenses	-	£2,500
Mayor's Allowance	-	£2,500
Newsletter and Publications	-	£9,000

Town/Neighbourhood Plan	-	£15,000
Economic Employment Support	-	£5,000
Joint Working with BDC/ECC/Parishes	-	£3,000
Administration/Central Services	-	£48,500

**Total Expenditure** - **£86,600**

Income

Administration/Central Services	-	£2,500
Hall Hire	-	£10,000
Bank/Investment Income	-	£3,000

**Total Income** - **£15,500**

(iii) **Earmarked Reserves**

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

Comment was made that the rate of accrual on the vehicle and equipment replacement funds should provide ample cover for when renewal is required. It was noted that funding for the park has been earmarked for four years and has still not been used by the District Council.

**RECOMMENDED** That the following earmarked reserves be approved as at April 2016 –

Community Committee

Puppet Festival	-	£6,612
-----------------	---	--------

**Total** - **£6,612**

Environment Committee

CCTV	-	£5,000
Town Park Funding	-	£26,000
Vehicle Replacement Fund	-	£10,112
Equipment Replacement Fund	-	£7,000

**Total** - **£48,112**

Policy and Resources Committee

Major Repairs and Renewals	-	£15,000
Election Expenses	-	£6,500
Members' Allowance	-	£3,200

**Total** - **£24,700**

**Total Earmarked Funds** - **£79,424**

(iv) **Puppet Festival**

An updated schedule was received.

The Town Clerk said that the reserves went down this year. The Town Council received £1,000 less from the District Council. More stewards had been employed for the additional venue of CoFunds car park and a record number of Performing Acts had been booked.

£18,000 would be made available for the 2016 Puppet Festival.

**RESOLVED** That the details be received and noted.

**4. PRECEPT 2016/2017**

A revised Precept Calculation sheet was tabled. The Chairman circulated a Forecast sheet for the next four financial years and a proposed slide presentation for Town Council setting out both the budget figures and the Business Plan, detailing the external pressures, opportunities and outcomes for the Town Council.

The Chairman explained the influencing factors in this year's Precept and the pressures put upon the Town Council that are outside of its control. He spoke about the proposed housing growth in the District and that Witham's prime location would indicate a big increase in population. He referred to the Forecast figures and that the Town Council could be running at a potential deficit within 3 years and that it was wise to take pre-emptive action. The Town Clerk stated that although the current level of General Reserves are healthy and that the projected forecasts may ultimately prove more positive, he agreed with the assumption of a downward trend. The Chairman thought that other authority's precepts would rise and it would therefore not be out of line to increase the Town Council's precept.

It was suggested that the following responses should be made to the District Council's consultation on the phasing out of the Localism Fund –

- That any reductions in the Localism Fund should be linked to the government's Settlement Funding Assessment (as the District Council was proposing for the CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau) and BDVSA (Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency)) instead of the Revenue Support Grant as originally decided by the District Council, which would result in a fairer and slower rate of decrease for the Town Council,
- A refund on the Council Tax Collection Fund should be requested in line with last year,
- Early clarity of the Community Infrastructure Levy should be requested as between 10 – 15% could be claimed on new housing,
- Allocation of new housing bonus should be closely related to infrastructure needs arising from the new housing.

The Chairman identified initiatives which supported the premise of increasing the precept. He stressed the importance of clarity in what needed to be done. The Town Clerk advised that the budget is prudent with costs streamlined but further focussed investigation into each budget head could also be undertaken.

Members then considered areas of large expenditure and important decisions that would need to be taken at next week's Town Council Meeting. This included new accommodation for the Outside Spaces Team and River Walk issues.

It was agreed to recommend a small increase in the Precept, reflecting the reduction in Localism Fund provided by the District Council (from last year to this year) in this year's precept request. For Tax Band D ratepayers this will mean a small rise from £52.77 to £54.00.

**RECOMMENDED** That the response described above be made to Braintree District Council's budget consultation for 2016 – 2017.

**RECOMMENDED** That a precept of £422,556 be agreed for 2016/2017, a Band 'D' equivalent of £54.00.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.28 p.m.

Councillor M.C.M. Lager  
Chairman

MS/GK/14.1.2016