

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL  
RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**23 SEPTEMBER 2013**

**PRESENT:-** Councillor Cooke (in the Chair ); Councillors Blissett, Hinchcliffe, Kinch, Mrs Moorhouse and Robinson.

**Also in attendance:-** Councillors Deacon and Mrs Grady.

**Officers:-** Mr King (Town Clerk) and Mrs Plant (Assistant Clerk).

**16. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Watson.

**Resolved** – That Councillor Watson's apologies be accepted.

**17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with this Council's adopted Code of Conduct (Minute 72(a)/Sep/12 refers), Members were asked whether they had any personal or prejudicial interests in any matter on the agenda and, if so, to declare those interests at this point of the meeting. Members were reminded that a declaration could be given later in the meeting if a need arose during discussion. There were no declarations of interest at this juncture.

**18. RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING – 24 JUNE 2013 – MINUTES**

**Resolved** – That the Minutes be accepted as a correct record.

**19. BUDGET MONITORING REPORTS**

Submitted – A report and associated Appendices relating to payments and receipts for the period 18 June to 16 September 2013, income and expenditure relating to the month end of August 2013 (Month 5) and income and expenditure by cost centre.

**Resolved** – That the information be received and noted.

**20. SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES**

Submitted – A report prepared in response to a request by this Committee for a review of this Council's position on the payment of subsistence allowances (Minute 12b/June/13 refers) and the various rates of payment were outlined. It was noted that there was no evidence to suggest that any member (or officer) of this council had been dissuaded or prevented from attending a business meeting or training session in pursuit of town council duties as a result of there currently being no arrangements for the payment of subsistence allowances as well as the potential cost implications to the Council should an allowance be introduced.

**Resolved** – That the Town Council maintains its current policy and does not make subsistence payments to either members or staff.

**21. RESERVES REVIEW**

Submitted – A report detailing the Council's current General and Earmarked Reserves situation so that an in-depth review could be carried out. In respect of the General Reserves, it was stressed that the current target of £50,000 was now considered insufficient to meet this Council's objectives and commitments. In respect of the Earmarked Reserves, it was confirmed that the Public Seats, Bouch Way Play Area, Market Place Public Toilets, Wayfinding Units and Galgate Greens Project Earmarked Reserves could not

be reallocated as they were firmly committed or otherwise ring-fenced. It was noted that the Christmas Emergency Fund, Remembrance Garden and Dawson Road Play Area Earmarked Reserves were to be reviewed by the relevant Committee to decide a position to recommend to Council, subsequently leaving the Asset Transfers, Office Move, IT Work and Nameboards Earmarked Reserves to be reviewed by this Committee.

**Resolved** – That the following reserve levels be recommended to full Council as part of the overall 2014/15 budget consideration:-

- (i) That the target for this Council's overall General Reserve be increased to £70,000;
- (ii) That the Earmarked Reserves covering: Asset Transfers, Office Move, IT Work and Nameboards be discontinued; and
- (iii) That an amount of £5,000 from those discontinued Earmarked Reserves be transferred to a new Resources Contingencies Earmarked Reserve to be specifically used for capital issues within the remit of the Resources Committee, with the residual amount of £11,292 being returned to the General Reserve.

## **22. BUSINESS CASE FOR REPLACEMENT IT AND SOFTWARE**

Submitted – A report outlining the business case for replacing the Council's current but outdated PCs and laptop computer with contemporary equipment and up-to-date software to support the efficient administration of the Council and communication with other organisations and individuals, including replacement options.

**Resolved** – (a) That replacement IT and software be purchased from reserves, funded over three years with an annual revenue budget commitment of £850 in each of the years 2014/15 – 2016/17 to enable replacement of the existing IT equipment and software on that basis be recommended to full Council as part of the overall 2014/15 budget consideration.

(b) That, at the appropriate time, the old PCs and laptop computer be ethically recycled.

## **23. MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN OUTLINE**

Submitted – A report setting out the basic parameters to a three-year financial plan for the town council to be used to prepare a detailed plan alongside the preparation of the 2014/15 budget, including the anticipated effect of Durham County Council's approach to the Local Council Tax Support Grant.

**Resolved** – That the following assumptions to enable a Medium-Term Financial Plan be built into the overall 2014/15 budget:-

- (i) The reduction in grant income, based on the Local Council Tax Support Grant as assumed by Durham County Council be as follows:-

	<b>£</b>	<b>Year on Year Reduction (£)</b>
Current LCTSG paid	16,467	-
Forecast LCTSG 2014/15	14,103	2,364
Forecast LCTSG 2015/16	12,049	2,054
Forecast LCTSG 2016/17	10,493	1,556
Forecast LCTSG 2017/18	8,938	1,555

- (ii) A notional cap of 2%, year-on-year affecting net expenditure and precept be used for planning purposes, with note that increases in the precept will constrain spending in the absence of other sources of income; and

- (iii) That periodic spending should be programmed into averaged annual commitments where this can be achieved.

#### **24. BUDGET 2014/15 – INITIAL CONSIDERATION**

Submitted – A report confirming the structured approach which would be adopted in respect of the 2014/15 budgetary process, involving all the various factors of the Council's finances and with options put forward to meet current and future requirements. A synopsis was provided of the budgetary timescale and the detailed scheduling of meetings, including submissions from other Committees, with the whole of the proposed budget for 2014/15 to be presented to the full Council meeting scheduled for 20 January 2014.

The submitted report also outlined the major parameters and issues which the Committee would have to take into account during the whole of the current process and beyond.

**Resolved** – (a) That the following budgetary allocations for 2014/15 (all expenditure allocations) be provisionally approved for onward transmission to full Council in due course, subject to an examination of the overall budget by this Committee:-

- (1) **Mayoral Allowance** - £900 (no change) (£800 for the Town Mayor and £100 for the Deputy Town Mayor);
- (2) **Training** - £750 (decrease of £250);
- (3) **Audit Fees** - £1,460 (no change);
- (4) **Insurance** - £2,080 (decrease of £250);
- (5) **Accounts Software Package** - £230 (increase of £5);
- (6) **Office Rental** - £4,020 (increase of £9);
- (7) **Council Tax/Water Rates** - £872 (increase of £17);
- (8) **Electricity** - £1,250 (no change);
- (9) **Office Maintenance** - £195 (no change);
- (10) **Office Equipment** - £1,500 (no change);
- (11) **Telephone** - £650 (no change);
- (12) **Stationery and Office Goods** - £650 (decrease of £100);
- (13) **Postage** - £550 (decrease of £200);
- (14) **Books & Publications** - £100 (no change);
- (15) **Meeting Room Hire** - £940 (increase of £190);
- (16) **Advertising** - Nil (decrease of £150);
- (17) **Public Noticeboard** - £250 (increase of £70);
- (18) **Wayfinding Units** - £100 (no change);
- (19) **Bede Road Bus Shelter** - £50 (no change);
- (20) **Blue Plaques** - Nil (decrease of £350);
- (21) **Bartlemere/Kalafat Lighting** - Nil (decrease of £4,000); and
- (22) **Market Place Public Toilets** - £5,771 (increase of £3,591).

(b) That from 2014/15 the 'Advertising' and 'Public Noticeboard' budgetary allocations be amalgamated into one budgetary heading of 'Communication'.