

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

11 JANUARY 2016

PRESENT: Councillor Cooke (in the Chair); Councillors Blissett, Harrison, Kinch, Mrs Thompson and Mrs Moorhouse.

Officers: Mr King (Town Clerk) and Mrs Woodward (Deputy Clerk).

In attendance: Councillor Marshall (until Minute 56); two members of the press.

49. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES

None

50. 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.

51. RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING – 2 NOVEMBER 2015 – MINUTES

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

52. WOODLEIGH WORKING GROUP – 17 DECEMBER 2015 – DRAFT NOTES

It was reported that the Woodleigh Working Group was due to meet 14 January.

Resolved – That the draft notes and information be noted.

53. BUDGET MONITORING REPORTS

Submitted – A report outlining budget activity since the start of the 2015/16 financial year; associated appendices relating to payments and receipts for the period 1 October 2015 to 21 December 2015; and income & expenditure relating to the month end of November 2015 (Month 8).

Resolved – (a) That the information be received and noted; and

(b) That thanks be given to Mrs Smith, Services Officer for all the preparation work.

54. WEBSITE CHANGES

Received – a report describing a change to the hosting arrangements for the town council's website to be implemented from 1 April 2016 by the county council. There was the option of purchasing a Service Level Agreement (SLA) from Durham County Council (DCC) to host the website (via WordPress) with full website support. It was noted that if the town council resolved not to purchase the SLA, DCC would continue to host its website until 31 March 2017, with a charge for some support. This would give the town council time to research alternatives and to implement the most cost-effective alternative.

It was mooted that the town council could purchase a site direct from WordPress (platform and content management system) for half the cost of the SLA. The design, set-up and population costs of the website would be borne by the office. It was recommended that budgetary provision was made in the 2016/17 budget to maintain the

website. Members also expressed an interest having individual town councillor email addresses.

Resolved – (a) That the town council establishes a budget heading of £250 to cover the cost of maintaining its website annually from 2016/17; and
(b) That the Clerk identify options for maintaining the website within this budget, including options for members having individual town council email addresses, for consideration of the Resources Committee during 2016/17.

55. BLUE PLAQUE – COMMEMORATION OF FRANK SHIELDS

Received – a report outlining a request to erect a blue plaque to commemorate Francis (Frank) Shields – The Teesdale Hermit (1815-1881). Councillor Marshall elaborated on the information provided, researched by David Butler (Durham Historical Enterprises). Talks were being given on Frank Shields around the country and English Heritage had put together information and photographs about his life for visitors to Barnard Castle. It was suggested that the blue plaque could be erected on Woodleigh (subject to permissions) close to the castle, where he lived. Members felt that recognition was needed. It was further acknowledged that the blue plaque trail and audio commentary would need updating subsequently.

Resolved – (a) That the town council supports the request to commemorate Frank Shields with a blue plaque and;
(b) That the town council establishes a budget heading of £350 to cover the purchase and erection of a blue plaque in 2016/17.

56. BUDGET 2016/17 – FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Submitted – A report considering the 2016/17 budget as a whole to enable recommendations to be formulated, including the recommended Precept figure, following consideration of the 2016/17 budget carried out at the Resources Committee meetings on 7 September and 2 November, and following consideration by Full Council of proposed new budgetary items. To aid members in their deliberations, details were supplied of the 2016/17 recommendations and the comparison between 2015/16 and 2016/17, with financial details in the Appendix.

Members were reminded of the overall parameters which had to continue to be applied to the budgetary exercise, including the effects of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant (LCTRSG) to the budget.

It was confirmed that the Precept Notification Date was 29 January 2016.

Members were faced with a choice of calculating the budget incorporating the growth items to date, or on a lower percentage precept increase per Band D household, requiring reductions in expenditure. Based on presented recommendations, the increase in the Band D equivalent precept would be 10.5% to fund an increase in expenditure of 19.96% related to the transfer of assets and services from the county council to the town council. Members overall felt that the increase in Band D precept was too high. It was proposed that the Community Events budgetary item be reduced to focus on 3 or 4 key major events and that the Donations budgetary item be reduced, with applicants bidding instead to the Mayor's Charity (community chest). Councillor Mrs Moorhouse proposed that the Mayor's community chest could continue with subsequent Town Mayors.

The current position of the Town Council's Reserves was noted at £61,129.72. Concern was expressed about the increased call on General Reserves, currently totalling £45,835.09.

Resolved – (a) That the following recommendations be submitted to the Council meeting scheduled for 18 January 2016:

Item	Budget Heading	Expenditure
1	Mayoral Allowance	£1,200 – increase of £300 (Mayor £1,000; Deputy Mayor £200)
2	Training	£500 – no change
3	Audit Fees	£1,460 – no change
4	Bank Charges	£144 – increase of £144
5	Insurance	£2,280 – increase of £130
6	Society of Local Council Clerks	£236 – no change
7	Co. Durham Association	£710 – increase of £54
8	Accounts Software Package	£240 – no change
9	Travel Allowance	£300 – no change
10	Chairs of Office	£50 – no change
11-14	Salaries and Wages	£82,883 – increase of £1,594 (subject to Minute 64 and including 1% pay inflation not yet agreed)
15	Local Government Pension	£15,202 – no change (subject to Minute 64)
16	Employer On Costs	£6,800 (decrease of £170) (subject to Minute 64)
17	Office Rental	£4,715 – no change
18	Council Tax/Water Rates	£898 – no change
19	Electricity	£1,250 – no change
20	Office Maintenance	£195 – no change
21	Telephone/ Broadband	£924 – increase of £44
22	Office Equipment	£1,575 – no change
23	Stationery/ Office Goods	£650 – no change
24	Postage	£450 – decrease of £100
25	Books/ Publications	£100 – no change
26	Meeting Room Hire	Nil – decrease of £940 Item to be deleted.
27	Employee Eye Tests	£25 – no change
28	Communication	£150 – no change
29	Wayfinding Units	£100 – no change
30	Allotments	Expenditure £4,065 – increase of £219 and Income £4,065 – increase of £219 – net position unchanged
31	Mini Golf	Expenditure £10,000 – increase of £1,000 and Income £10,000 – no change – balanced net position
32	Christmas Lights	£6,500 – no change
33	Play Areas	Expenditure £11,500 – increase of £1,000 and Income £117 – no change
34	Bede Road Bus Shelter	£50 – no change

Item	Budget Heading	Expenditure
35	Dog Fouling	£300 – decrease of £200
36	Donations	£500 – decrease of £2,500
37	Floral and Open Spaces	£9,500 – increase of £3,500
38	Castle Floodlighting	£400 – no change
39	War Memorials	£710 – no change
40	Public Seats	No budgetary allocation required
41	Community Events	£7,000 – decrease of £6,589
42	Contingencies	Nil – no change General Reserves up to a maximum of £1,500 to be used during the year if necessary.
43	Public Toilets	£12,924 – increase of £8,000
44	Replacement IT & Software	£850 – no change
45	Digital Voice Recorder	Nil – decrease of £150 Item to be deleted
46	Miscellaneous	Nil
47	Woodleigh Operational Costs	£15,695 (new item) – increase of £15,695
48	Mayoral Chains Collar	Nil - New item (donation by Town Mayor) Item to be deleted
49	Market Cross Floodlighting	£300 – new item
50	Website	£250 – new item
51	Blue Plaque	£350 – new item
52	Wednesday Market	£5,000 – new item

Item	Budget Heading	Income
1	Fees and Charges	£14,182 (increase of £219)
2	Bank Interest	£900 – no change
3	Grants	Nil – no change
4	Donations	Nil – no change
5	Sponsorship	Nil – no change
6	Miscellaneous	Nil – no change
7	Cumulative Fund	Nil – no change
8	Precept	£166,583
9	LCTRS	£9,105
10	Woodleigh Operational	£13,250
11	Wednesday Market	£5,000

(b) That the following fees and charges be recommended to the Council meeting scheduled for 18 January 2016:

(A) Play Areas – Ten Fields (Barnard Castle Football Club Rental)

£100 for 2016/17 (no change) and £100 in years 2017/18 and 2018/19 (no change).

(B) Play Areas - Gate Licence Fees

£17.00 for 2016/17 (no change)

Play Areas 2016/17 – Income £117 – no change

(C) Allotments (per plot)

2016/17 allotment plot rental £45 for 2016/17 (increase of £3) and £45 for 2017/18 (no change)

(D) Mini Golf – 2016 season:

- £2.00 per round for all users (no change)
- £6.00 group ticket (up to 4 players) (no change)
- £10.00 loyalty ticket (no change)
- £0.50 lost ball (no change)
- £5.00 damaged club (no change);

(c) That the precept be £166,494, Band D £94.74, equating to a 4.8% rise in Band D equivalent precept (subject to resolution at Minute 64);

(d) That thanks be given to the Town Mayor, Councillor Mrs Moorhouse, for the generous donation of the Mayoral Collar; and

(e) That thanks be given to office staff, particularly Mrs Smith, Services Officer (Finance) for preparation of budget reports.

57. MARKET CROSS LIGHTING SCHEME

It was reported that the floodlights around the market cross were installed by Durham County Council's Street Lighting team on 22 November and focussed on 26 November. The lights were operational daily from dusk to midnight. Monitoring reports would continue to be provided to Teesdale Action Partnership as part of the funding conditions.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

58. DEFIBRILLATOR

It was reported that pursuant to Resources Minute 42/Nov/15, the town council had purchased an Intelligent Public Access Defibrillator (IPAD) SP1 plus cabinet from WEL Medical Ltd. The installation, on the exterior of St. Mary's Parish Hall, fell under the Town Council's permitted development rights, subject to agreement of the exact location with Durham County conservation and planning officer. Defibrillator Awareness training was to be organised via NEAS.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted; and
(b) That thanks be given to Friends of Richardson Hospital for their generous donation.

59. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI) REQUESTS

It was reported that one FoI request about the town council's leisure and cultural facilities was received in December 2015 from Parkwood Leisure and responded to within the required timescale. Members were further informed that another FoI request had been recently received from the BBC regarding reserves, precept and staffing costs.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

60. REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS

It was reported that an initial meeting was arranged for 14 January and a report would be submitted to the next Resources Committee on 7 March.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

61. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (IN RESPECT OF ITEMS 62, 63 AND 64 BELOW)

Resolved – That, under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 §1(2), the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the matters referred to at items 62, 63 and 64, below, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted: in that it was not in the public interest and pertained to individual members of staff.

62. INTERNAL AUDIT 2015/16 – HALF YEAR INTERNAL CONTROL REPORTS

Submitted – a report detailing the half-year internal control checks carried out during 2015/16. A thorough and critical audit was undertaken on three areas of work. Full assurance was awarded to two systems: Accounts Payable (creditors) and Income Collection & Banking Arrangements, with no issues found for either. Substantial assurance was awarded to Review of Policy and Procedure for Contracting of Goods and Services, with one issue highlighted, to tighten up procedure, which would be reviewed through relevant Committees.

Resolved – (a) That the information and recommended action be noted and;
(b) That thanks be given to Mrs Smith, Services Officer (Finance) for exemplary work.

63. CHRISTMAS LIGHTING – DISPOSAL OF MOTIFS

It was recommended that this matter be deferred until costs had been obtained for disposal of motifs in their current condition; disposal of motifs once repaired and tested; and scrap value of motifs.

Resolved – That disposal of the Town Council's Christmas lighting motifs be deferred until next Resources Committee on 7 March.

64. SERVICES OFFICER POSTS REVIEW

Received – a report setting out a proposal to regrade the Town Council's Services Officer posts from SC4 to SC5, in recognition of additional duties and impending growth, and requesting a change to the working hours of the Services Officer (Civic).

It was reported that the two Services Officer posts had developed and diversified over time from administration support to running operational services and project management. Finance was now more complex and additional assets and services transfers were imminent, including responsibility for additional staff. There had been a significant increase in civic activity, together with changes in arrangements around the Poppy Appeal and Remembrance Sunday.

Resolved – (a) That both Services Officer posts be regraded to SC5 from April 2016;
(b) That Services Officer (Civic) hours be increased to 30 hours per week; and
(c) That the consequent cumulative increase in employee costs (£5,240) be used to revise the figures agreed for gross expenditure and precept, for recommendation to Full Council on 18 January.