

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL  
RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**6 MARCH 2017**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Cooke (in the Chair); Councillors Mrs Moorhouse, Harrison, Sutherland, Blissett and Mrs Thompson (from item 60).

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

**In attendance:** One member of the press.

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

Apologies were received from Councillor Kinch, who was unwell.

**Resolved** – That the apologies be accepted.

**60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with this Council's adopted Code of Conduct (Minute 17(b)/May/16 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.

**61. RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING – 16 JANUARY 2017 – MINUTES**

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

**62. REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS**

**(A)** Task & Finish Group Notes:

- (i) **31 January 2017** (First Review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations).
- (ii) **14 February 2017** (Second Review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations; First Review of Complaints Procedure and Lone Working Policy; Equality policy and Youth Council draft constitution).
- (iii) **24 February 2017** (Draft) (Second Review of Complaints Procedure and Lone Working Policy; Members' Code of Conduct).

Specific thanks was given to the Clerk in acknowledgement of the work undertaken.

**(B) Resolved** – (a) That the documents reviewed and amended by the Task & Finish Group to date, namely: Standing Orders and Financial Regulations; Complaints Procedure; Lone Working Policy; Equality policy and Members' Code of Conduct, be recommended to Full Council for approval at its meeting on 20 March 2017;

(b) That further work be undertaken with YMCA, Teesdale School, Barnard Castle School and others, to include members of the town council, to establish an appropriate and sustainable constitution for the Barnard Castle Youth Council; and

(c) That, in view of the requirement to undertake more work to establish a constitution for the proposed Youth Council, that Council reconsider the allocation of £500 in the 2017/18 budget and repurpose this fund for a specific youth project.

**63. BUDGET MONITORING REPORTS**

Submitted– a report outlining budget activity for the 2016/17 financial year since the last Resources Committee meeting on 16 January 2017. Budget monitoring information was presented relating to payments and receipts for the period 1 January to 31 January 2017

and income & expenditure relating to the month end of January 2017 (Month 10, 2016/17).

Members noted the hard work carried out by the Services Officer (Finance) in producing financial reports.

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

#### **64. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

Received – a draft Medium Term Plan for 2017-2020 identifying expenditure trends over a three year period; estimating sources of income available over that period and identifying funding gaps and opportunities; and establishing a budget strategy which the council could use to programme service changes over more than one financial year.

Non-pay inflation affecting all bought-in goods and services had been estimated at 2% per annum. Pay-inflation had been estimated at 1% per annum. It was assumed that the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant (LCTRS) would reduce to zero over the next two years. It was also anticipated that the notional annual increase in budget and/ or precept might be capped at 2%. It was proposed that the town council considered opportunities to prioritise in-year and year-on-year expenditure savings and that, for planning purposes, it was assumed that the precept demand would rise by 2% per annum to address the shortfall in LCTRS and the managed demand for inflation in expenditure.

**Resolved** – That the Medium Term Financial plan, as submitted, covering the years 2017- 2020, be approved.

#### **65. RESERVES REVIEW**

Submitted – a report setting out the Council's current earmarked and general reserves and comparing these to the year-end positions since 2012/13, so that an in-depth review could be carried out.

The target for this Council's overall General Reserves was increased to £70,000 for 2014/15 (Minute 77(i)/Dec/13 refers) to cover approximately 4 months (33%) gross expenditure, should the need arise. At the end of 2015/16, general reserves stood at just under £83,000, (39%).

Members noted the reserves which were firmly committed or otherwise ring-fenced and those which had or would be reviewed by the relevant Committee and, in addition, decided a position to recommend to Council for those earmarked reserves which were its responsibility.

The Earmarked Reserve for the Neighbourhood Plan was queried. Opportunities still existed and the plan needed to be revisited after the May elections. A mechanism was needed, ideally developed with the adjoining parishes of Marwood and Startforth.

**Resolved** – (a) That the reserves position be noted; and  
(b) That the following Earmarked Reserves be retired and any outstanding balance be transferred to the General Reserve: HM Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Market Place Public Toilets and Wayfinding Units.

#### **66. RE-CHARGE FOR THE BY-ELECTION HELD ON 5 MAY 2016**

It was reported that an invoice had been received from Durham County Council (DCC) for £3,629.88, being the recharge for the West Ward by-election held on 5 May 2016.

Members noted that this was the second recharge for 2016/17; an invoice for £4,066.65 was received in May 2016 for the East Ward by-election held on 10 December 2015. Members were reminded that there was currently no budget for election expenses and that the cost would need to be met from the town council's general reserves.

**Resolved** – That payment of £3,629.88 to DCC for the by-election held on 5 May 2016 be approved, funded out of the town council's general reserves.

## **67. TRAINING**

It was reported that pursuant to Minute 40/Oct/16, Rialtas Business Solutions had delivered a two day training course to staff on 26 and 27 January. The training was extremely beneficial, particularly for the Services Officer (Finance). Training covered the capacity of the software; cash books; budgets; journals; VAT; management reports; and year end account preparation in full. The training would maximise effective and efficient operation of the town council's financial management systems from 2017/18.

It was further noted that training would be offered through CDALC following the May elections for all councillors and for chairmanship. It had been previously discussed that training in Teesdale might be able to attract support from the proportionally large number of parish councils based in southwest Durham. Woodleigh had been offered as a possible venue for such training free of charge. A decision was awaited from the County Training Partnership on 7 March and any decision would be communicated to members of Council following the election on 4 May.

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

## **68. WOODLEIGH WORKING GROUP**

A meeting was scheduled for Thursday 9 March. Detailed terms related to the freehold asset transfer of the Scar Top play area and mini golf course from Durham County Council forwarded by the town council's solicitor would be considered. It was proposed that, to enable this matter to be duly progressed, recommendations from that meeting were made directly to full Council on 20 March for resolution.

It had become apparent that the trajectory of the sun in the mornings and late afternoons was resulting in glare in the office, which could not be eliminated, as there were no blinds currently at the windows of the Woodleigh ground floor office. This was now an urgent health and safety matter for staff. The purchase of blinds could be funded from the planned and preventative maintenance budget, which had a surplus of £400. There was also an opportunity to renew the broken vertical blinds in the Dawson Room from the room hire income.

Pursuant to Minute 47/Jan/17, when it was resolved that a programme of maintenance for the building be drawn up and prioritised; estimates be sought for painting of window frames; and estimates be sought for secondary double glazing, estimates had yet to be sought and these would be brought to a meeting of the group, and thereafter Resources Committee, later in the year.

**Resolved** – (a) That the information be noted; and  
(b) That roller blinds for the ground floor office and replacement vertical blinds for the Dawson Room be purchased at the best value obtainable, out of planned and

preventative maintenance budget and Dawson Room hire income respectively; and  
(c) That recommendations from the Woodleigh Working Group meeting on 9 March 2017 be made to full Council meeting on 20 March 2017, for resolution.

**69. BARNARD CASTLE MASTERPLAN**

Members were informed that Durham County Council was presenting information about the Barnard Castle Masterplan at the Teesdale Area Action Partnership (TAP) meeting on Wednesday 15 March. Councillor Kinch had proposed that a town council response be formulated and that the Town Mayor attended to present this. As the TAP meeting was prior to full Council on 20 March, the matter had been brought to Resources Committee for a resolution. A copy of the published Masterplan, with initial amendments proposed, was circulated and discussed.

**Resolved** – That a town council response, as discussed, be formulated on the Barnard Castle Masterplan and circulated for Members' final comments prior to presentation at the TAP meeting on 15 March, attended by the Town Mayor.