

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

14 JANUARY 2019

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

In attendance: Councillor Raw; one member of the press.

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

43. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES

None

44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with this Council's adopted Code of Conduct (Minute 10/May/18 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.

45. RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING – 5 NOVEMBER 2018 – MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

46. BUDGET MONITORING REPORTS

Submitted – a report outlining budget activity for the 2018/19 financial year. Budget monitoring information was presented relating to payments and receipts for the period 1 October to 31 December 2018 and income & expenditure relating to the same period (Months 7 to 9 2018/19).

It was reported that reconciliation of the 2018/19 third quarter was carried out by the Vice Chair on 8 January 2019.

Resolved – That the information be received and noted.

47. BUDGET 2019/20 – FINAL REPORT

Councillor Mrs Moorhouse expressed concerns regarding The Witham's last minute request to levy an amount on the precept. This was an irregular request and there was no current Council procedure to deal with this. It was important that this request did not set a precedent. Councillor Sutherland proposed a motion that a request to levy an amount on the precept should not be included in the budget without prior discussion at Committee/ Council. This was seconded by Councillor Mrs Moorhouse. The motion was carried.

Submitted – a report considering the 2019/20 budget as a whole to enable recommendations to be formulated, including the recommended precept figure, and presented to the full Council meeting scheduled for 21 January 2019.

A budget breakdown was circulated comparing the approved 2018/19 budget with draft 2019/2020 budget.

It was reported that confirmation had been received that the LCTRS Grant the town council would receive in 2019/20 was £2,510 (decrease of £2,906 from 2018/19).

HMRC had informed the town council that it must commence digital filing of its VAT returns from 1 October 2019, resulting in an additional £59 charge to the software license.

On 7 December, NALC confirmed revised salary scales and a 2% pay inflation award on 1 April 2019.

Members were reminded that a review of all the Council's reserves took place in April 2018. Total balances and reserves at the end of the financial year 2018/19 stood at £137,225, of which £69,184 was in the Earmarked Reserve Funds (EMR).

It was proposed that an EMR for 'Replacement IT and Software' be created for 2019/20.

There was a discussion surrounding the limitations of a Neighbourhood Plan having any direct impact on development within the parish of Barnard Castle, given that there was little active interest from the community and limited opportunity for any development within the parish boundary which was not otherwise described or constrained by the County Plan. It was proposed that £7,500 in EMR for a Neighbourhood Plan be retired and returned to the General Reserve.

Members noted other calls on the General Reserve, namely, exterior repairs to Woodleigh in the region of £15,000 and anticipated expenditure on legal fees for lease transfers from Durham County Council (DCC) of £1,050.

An exceptional request was considered from The Witham, prompted by discussion with DCC, to levy a charge of £10 (per Band D equivalent household) on the town council's precept, to support The Witham. A levy of £10 equated to an expenditure of £18,272. This was unanimously opposed. The Committee felt that whilst it wanted the town council to continue to identify opportunities to work with the Witham and to support its role in the community, it could not commit to a levy on the precept in this form on behalf of all residents of the parish.

It was confirmed in December 2018 that the Secretary of State did not plan to extend the 'capping' budget referendum principles to town and parish councils in 2019/20. However, it was expected that the town council should behave responsibly and protect the taxpayer from 'excessive' precept increases.

Members chose to calculate the draft budget on a lower percentage precept increase per band D household. It was proposed that £2,500 be added to the Cumulative Fund for 2019/20 to support the revenue account.

Members were informed that if the proposed draft budget remained unchanged, the total 2019/20 demand on Durham County Council would be £193,446, made up of Precept of £190,936 and LCTRS Grant of £2,510. Based on parish tax base of 1,827.2 (Band D equivalent properties), it would equate to £104.50 per annum (an increase of £2.87 or 2.83% for a Band D property in Barnard Castle compared to 2018/19).

Durham County Council had confirmed that the Precept Notification Date was 25 January 2019.

Resolved – (a) That the draft 2019/20 budget be recommended to full Council on 21 January, as detailed below:

Cost Centre	Recommendation
Mayoral Allowance (101)	£1200 – no change (Mayoral Allowance £1,000 & Deputy Mayoral Allowance £200)
Training (101)	£1,000 – increase of £500
Audit Fees (101)	£1,490 – increase of £30
Bank Charges (101)	£800 – no change
Replacement IT & Software (101)	£850 – no change and that an EMR be created.
Insurance (101)	£2,200 – no change
Society of Local Council Clerks (101)	£447 – increase of £214
Co. Durham Association of Local Councils (101)	£733 – increase of £12
Accounts Software Package (101)	£438 – increase of £68
Travel Allowance (101)	£300 – no change
Office Equipment (101)	£1,575 – no change
Operational Costs (101)	£1,475 – no change
Salaries and Wages (102)	£102,528 – increase of £5,653
Local Government Pension (102)	£19,683 – increase of £1,077
Employer NI (102)	£8,715 – decrease of £5
Elections (104)	£5,000 – no change
Chains of Office (105)	£50 – no change
Woodleigh Operational Expenditure (106)	£11,000 – decrease of £2,877
Office Rental (106)	£8,000 – no change
Business/Water Rates (106)	£1,500 – no change
Civic Fund (107)	£500 – no change
Allotments (201)	£4,217 – no change
Mini Golf (211)	£10,000 – no change
Christmas Lights (221)	£6,500 – no change
Play Areas (231)	£14,000 – increase of £2,500
Dog Fouling (281)	£200 – decrease of £100
Wednesday Market (291)	£4,000 – increase of £1,000
Floral and Open Spaces (311)	£9,500 – no change
Floodlighting (321)	£700 – no change
War Memorials (331)	£500 – no change
Public Seats (341)	No budgetary allocation required.
Bede Road Bus Shelter (342)	£50 – no change
Community Events (354)	£7,140 – increase of £140
Contingencies (401)	Nil – no change – (with General Reserves to be used during the year if necessary).

Cost Centre	Recommendation
Blue Plaque (402)	Nil – no change
Wayfinding Units (404)	£100 – no change
Market Place Public Toilets (501)	£5,072 – increase of £148
GDPR Compliance (103)	£1,000 – decrease of £500
Durham Wildlife Trust Project (343)	Nil – decrease of £1,000
Defibrillator (New)	£100 – increase of £100
Youth Provision (Renewed)	£500 – increase of £500

(b) That in principle, any request to levy an amount on the precept be not included in the budget consideration without prior discussion at relevant Committee or Council;

(c) That an Ear Marked Reserve (EMR) of £850 for 'Replacement of IT and Software' be established;

(d) That the request from The Witham for a £10 levy on the precept (£18,272) be not recommended to full Council;

(e) That the Neighbourhood Plan EMR of £7,500 be retired and returned to the General Reserve; and

(f) That £2,500 from the General Reserve, funded by the retirement of the Neighbourhood Plan EMR, be applied to support the 2019/20 revenue account.

48. INTERNAL AUDIT – 2018/19 – HALF YEAR REPORTS

Pursuant to Minute 7/June/18, the Council's appointed internal auditor, Mr Gordon Fletcher, carried out a half yearly audit at the town council offices in November 2018. Full assurance was provided for all areas. The final reports would be submitted to Council on 21 January. As there were no issues, Mr Fletcher would attend Council in June 2019 to present his 2018/19 end of year audit findings.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

49. TRAINING

It was reported that the Clerk had successfully completed one unit and the Deputy Clerk two units of the CiLCA course. No additional training had been undertaken since 5 November.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

50. GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS REVIEW

Pursuant to Minute 35/Nov/18, the Clerk had conducted an initial review of the Council's Constitution against current guidance to bring forward recommended changes.

In July 2018, NALC issued revised guidance on its model standing orders to revise the description of 'Data Protection Officer' (DPO) and emphasise that once this phrase was used then the post was subject to the statutory reporting framework of the Data Protection Act 2018. The NALC guidance also clarified the wording of Standing Orders relating to contracts and to completion of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

The removal of the statutory requirement for a DPO also needed to be reflected in the Scheme of Delegation.

The review had identified a need for a Training and Development Policy, which would be proposed to the March meeting, alongside the 2019/20 Training and Development Plan.

Consequential amendments to the Staff Handbook were also required to reflect the revised pay scales published by NALC in December 2018 and Grievance Policy and Procedures, once NALC had revised its guidance as a result of the Ledbury Judgement. It was noted that recommendations were expected from the Committee on Standards in Public Life with respect of the Code of Conduct at the end of January 2019.

The resolved position of not accepting, in principle, requests to levy an amount on the precept outside an approved budget procedure also needed to be reflected in the Constitution.

Amendments would be brought to the March meeting.

Resolved – That progress be noted.

51. WOODLEIGH

Pursuant to Council on 19 November, additional quotations had been sought to repair and replace guttering, down pipes and associated fixtures and fittings on the exterior of Woodleigh. Due to the quotations received falling within Financial Regulation 4(a), these would be considered by Council on 21 January.

Resolved – That the information be noted.

52. ASSET TRANSFERS

Demesnes and Woodleigh Grounds – Correspondence was received from the town council's solicitor on 21 December, indicating that the legal costs to date were in excess of estimated costs of £450 plus VAT for completion of the first lease and £300 plus VAT for each of the remaining two leases. Members were asked to consider what would constitute a reasonable amount to pay.

In addition, on 14 January, the town council's solicitor requested demarcation on a map of the access routes to dog agility and rugby pitches. The plan had been duly marked and returned by the Clerk.

Bede Kirk – The Head of Estate for Durham Constabulary confirmed on 10 December 2018 that an independent valuation of the property had been obtained and once reviewed internally, the town council would be contacted.

Concern was expressed in the delay to asset transfers. It was proposed that Durham County Council (DCC) should pay additional legal costs. Councillor Mrs Moorhouse offered to approach DCC Chief Executive, Terry Collins, in the first instance.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted; and
(b) That Councillor Mrs Moorhouse approach DCC Chief Executive to express concerns in relation to delays in asset transfers.

53. SCAR TOP FLAG POLE

It was reported that in 2013, as part of the Scar Top redevelopment, the town council applied for advertising consent to display flags on the existing flagpole. The application was primarily to fly the English Heritage flag, plus other occasional official flags in connection with key events. Permission was granted in 2014 for a period of 5 years. The flagpole rope snapped in November 2018 and was repaired by DCC. It had been confirmed that advertising consent needed to be applied for again.

DCC Regeneration and Local Services was approaching English Heritage to see if they would be willing to fund 50% of the application for advertising consent. Members felt that, as it was not the town council's land or flagpole and only the English Heritage flag was flown, that it ought not to apply for, or contribute towards, advertising consent.

Resolved – That the town council does not submit an application for, or contribute towards, advertising consent to display flags on the existing Scar Top flagpole.

54. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (IN RESPECT OF ITEM 55, 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 item 55, below, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

55. STAFFING

Received – a report providing the Committee with background information to budgetary issues relating to staffing and to any other matters relating to the staff.

Resolved – (a) That the salary calculations underpinning the base budget recommendations be noted; and
(b) That the mini golf attendants (aged 24 and under) be paid £7.70 per hour for the 2019 season.