



MINUTES OF THE BRIDGEND TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Details:

Date: 6th December 2022

Time: 10.00 am

Location: Meeting held as a hybrid meeting both at Carnegie House and remotely via Microsoft Teams for Business under the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021

Staff: D Jones (Deputy Town Clerk/RFO), H Jenkins (Finance Officer)

In attendance:

Cllr Alan Wathan (in person)

Cllr Clair Webster (in person)

Cllr David Unwin (in person)

Cllr Michelle Blundell-Humphreys (in person)

Cllr Ann Lloyd (in person)

The Chair of Finance Committee, Cllr D Unwin, thanked the Deputy Clerk/RFO and staff for all their efforts reviewing budgets with committee's and producing the draft budget for 2023/34.

1. To receive apologies for absence:

Apologies of absence were received from Cllr T Wood (Mayor).

Absent: Cllr Chris Harding.

2. To receive Declarations of Interests (if any) of Members in respect of the business to be transacted

Cllr A Wathan declared a personal interest as a BCBC councillor.

3. To receive and sign Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 25th October 2022

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on the 25th October 2022 were approved as an accurate recording of discussion and duly signed by the Chair of Finance Committee.

4. To consider matters arising from the Finance Committee Meeting held on 25th October 2022

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The Town Clerk explained that all tents have now been removed from the land at the Town Hall, however there is a large amount of rubbish to be removed, which includes sharps. It was suggested that an external company is appointed to clear this rubbish. This was agreed by Members.

The Town Clerk advised that she had asked the contractor to move the Heras fencing to the perimeter of the site to prevent people re-entering the area through gaps in the hedge. The Town Clerk provided a brief overview of the status of the building and electrical works and advised that the new date for handover is 6th February 2023.

Page 5 – Election costs

The Deputy Clerk/RFO advised that she is still querying the election costs with BCBC.

5. To receive 2021/22 Year End Audit Update

The Deputy Clerk/RFO advised that she had not received the completion of the audit for 2021/22 and had emailed the audit office to query this. She explained that prior to the pandemic, the audit would usually be completed by the end of September.

6. To receive update on Damp Issue Works at Carnegie House

The Deputy Clerk/RFO advised that the Facilities Team have requested a start date from the contractor and are currently awaiting a response. She explained that all grant forms have been submitted and that the Facilities Officer has been liaising with CADW. Providing the work is completed by February 2023 it should not impact the grant, however the Facilities Officer and contractor will liaise with CADW in relation to potential delays due to adverse weather.

7. To receive progress on Job Centre Noticeboard

The Deputy Clerk/RFO advised that although the noticeboards have been gifted to the Town Council, they are located on someone else's land and therefore the Council needs to seek permission to use them. She also explained that no keys are available for the noticeboards therefore a locksmith is required to change the locks.

The Deputy Clerk/RFO reported that the Facilities Team had liaised with BCBC and Job Centre staff based within the property and had repeatedly contacted the property owner however had not received a response. She explained that without permission to use the noticeboards, the Council would technically be trespassing, and if reported, this would impact the professional memberships of some of the Facilities staff.

RESOLVED: For the Facilities Team to seek written confirmation from the Job Centre for Bridgend Town Council to use the notice boards located on the side of their building.

8. To consider information received regarding the Bridgend County Borough Council, Summer Holiday "Active 4 Life" programmes and thereon consider the provision of budget for 2023/24

The Deputy Town Clerk referred Members to an email response from BCBC detailing the outturn figures for the Summer 2022 scheme, 902 in total.

Chair of Finance Committee commented that the programme is well used and proposed that Bridgend Town Council support it again for Summer 2023. This was agreed by Members.

RESOLVED: To allocate budget to support the Summer Holiday "Active 4 Life" programmes for 2023/24

9. To consider 2023/24 budget request from Community Engagement and Wellbeing Committee

The Deputy Clerk/RFO presented the budget request from Community Engagement and Wellbeing Committee for 2023/24. Members received an explanation on each budget heading and associated cost. The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO explained that not all the requested budget is for Carnegie House

programmes and that Committee discussed community newsletters, annual website costs, town centre events and Christmas activities which will be discussed further at Full Council.

The Town Clerk advised Members that she had received an agenda item from The Mayor to be included on the agenda for the December Town Council meeting, for the Council to consider replicating the Maesteg Christmas Parade in Bridgend. She explained that this request had been received after the Community Engagement and Wellbeing Committee meeting and therefore this had not been considered or budgeted for at that meeting.

Members considered the budget allocated for each budget heading and approved the figures for inclusion in the draft budget.

RESOLVED: That the Finance Committee approve the 2023/24 budget request from the Community Engagement and Wellbeing Committee.

10. To consider 2023/24 budget request from Personnel Committee

The Chair explained that the budget request from Personnel Committee was considered in detail. It was noted that the budget includes NI & Tax (PAYE) contributions, pension contributions and an allocation for overtime.

RESOLVED: That the Finance Committee approve the 2023/24 budget request from the Personnel Committee.

11. To consider 2023/24 budget request from Facilities Committee

The Deputy Clerk/RFO presented the 2023/24 budget request from the Facilities Committee. It was noted that the budget had been discussed in detail and included the statutory and cyclical maintenance works required. Members received an explanation on each budget heading and associated cost. The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO explained that the forecasts are based on current usage and included a 20% increase for utilities and other services based on current circumstances.

RESOLVED: That the Finance Committee approve the 2023/24 budget request from the Facilities Committee.

12. To consider 2023/24 budget request from Facilities Committee for Town Hall

The Clerk presented the 2023/24 budget request from the Facilities Committee for the Town Hall. She explained that as per the Facilities Budget request, the budget had been discussed in detail and included the statutory and cyclical maintenance works required. Members received an explanation on each budget heading and associated cost. The Clerk advised that the forecasts were based on current usage and included a 20% increase for utilities and other services based on current circumstances.

The Clerk advised Members that she had contacted BCBC and received confirmation that the grant funding awarded for two projects as part of Phase 2, can be carried over to financial year 2023/24. She added that new quotes would need to be sought and therefore a 20% increase had been applied to the budget for match funding for these projects. This was agreed by Members.

The Clerk referenced NNDR and advised that on completion of the building works staff will advise the Valuation Office Agency of the change of use of the property and seek revaluation/assessment of the NNDR fees.

The Clerk provided an overview of the current situation at the Town Hall and explained that there may be some unknown costs due to recently identified issues with the heating system. She advised that she had received an estimated cost of replacing the current system as is however the replacement costs very much depend on what system Council wish to move forward with. Members discussed at length options for heating the property including the best form of eco heating as well as possible grants.

RESOLVED: That the Finance Committee approve the 2023/24 budget request from the Facilities Committee for the Town Hall.

13. To consider draft budget for 2023/24 and to thereon make recommendations to Council for the Bridgend Town Council 2023/24 budget and precept

The Deputy Clerk/RFO explained that the Regeneration Committee were due to meet last week however the meeting was cancelled at the request of the Chair of the Regeneration Committee and Mayor. She explained that unfortunately there was no time to reschedule the meeting, therefore budgets for Regeneration Projects will need to be discussed at the December full Council meeting.

Chair called for a ten-minute recess at 10.45 am

The meeting reconvened at 10.55am

- Members considered and discussed the budgets for Office Costs. A budget of £10,800 was agreed.
- Members considered and discussed the military budget. A budget of £5,500 was agreed for the War Memorial works and £5,000 for Military Parades.
- Members discussed allocating £10,000 for Advertising budget. This was agreed by Members.
- The Deputy Clerk/RFO explained that income from allotment rent off-sets some of the Allotment costs.
- Members discussed allocating £50,000 for Contingency budget. This was agreed by Members.
- Members discussed the Grant aid budget and reduced it from £7,500 to £5,000.
- Members discussed the budget for Civic activities and Town Twinning events and agreed the Civic Activities budget should be set at £5,000.
- Members agreed that as it is not an election year, no budget should be allocated for Election Costs in 2023/24.
- The Town Clerk advised that the Council needs to set a training budget for the Statutory training plan. Members agreed to set a budget of £1,000 for Members Expenses, training and Professional Fees.
- Members discussed grass cutting and landscaping at the Town Hall and agreed that this should be included in the Town Hall budget.
- Members agreed a budget of £3,850.00 for the Summer Playscheme 2023.
- The Deputy Clerk/RFO advised that she had not received the new fee for One Voice Wales Membership for 2023/24. Members agreed to keep the budget the same as the current year and for the difference to be vired accordingly.
- Members agreed to budget the required amounts for the statutory Councillor Remuneration.
- The Town Clerk explained that she had prepared a report for full Council regarding the development of a flexible Heritage Space at Carnegie House. She advised that in order to seek grant funding to take the project forward, the Council would need a business plan. The Clerk explained that she had researched a number of professional companies that could work with the Council to scope the project and develop a business plan so that the Council could apply for grant funding in the future, however a budget would be required

- Members discussed equipment needed for hybrid meetings. It was felt that the Owl System is only suitable for smaller meetings and a new system should be purchased for full Council meetings at the Town Hall. Members agreed a budget of £3,000 for hybrid meeting equipment.
- Members discussed the maintenance of Ruamah Burial Ground and agreed a budget of £2,000 for this in 2023/24.
- The draft budget was updated in real-time, and the Finance Committee were provided with updated figures as budgets were amended.
- Members considered and discussed the Council's forecast general reserves. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk/RFO explained guidance on general reserves and advised that although there is no specific amount that the Council must keep in reserves, it is recommended that the Council has between 3-6 months of monthly expenditure in reserves for unforeseen circumstances.
- The Chair of Finance Committee proposed that there should be no increase in the precept for 2023/24 and recommended that the Council use general reserves to offset the budget to keep the precept figure at £637,979.00 for 2023/24.
- It was highlighted that this would reduce general reserves to approximately 2 months and 1 week of monthly expenditure. This was agreed by Members.
- The Deputy Clerk/RFO advised that the draft budget may be adjusted at the December Town Council meeting after consideration of the Regeneration Projects and decisions of Council.

The Chair of Finance Committee explained that he usually prepares a precept statement to explain the Council budget and noted that he will do this as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: That the Bridgend Town Council Precept for 2023/24 should be set at £637,979.00 which will result in a 0% increase for residents and that the difference between the budget and the precept figure should be taken from the Council's general reserves.

14. To consider Grant Aid Application from:

a) St John's House Trust (Bridgend)

The Chair of Finance Committee gave background information to Members about the support the Town Council has given to St John's House over the past 24 years. He explained that in 1998, Bridgend Town Council provided £10,000 towards a study into what could be done with the building and between 2001 – 2044 the Council provided an additional £15,000 to try to get the building up and running. The Chair noted that between 2004 – 2014 the St John's House Trust was formed and between 2014 – 2020, the Town Council gave further grant aid to bring the total funding awarded to approximately £50,000.

The Chair explained that the property is owned by The Order of St John's which is based in St Albans. He added that the St John's House Trust have been liaising with the owners and have agreed a deal to purchase the building.

The Chair highlighted that although he supports the purchase of the building, he cannot support this latest request for funding of £10,000 as it appears to be to cover the cost of VAT on the purchase of the property. He explained that the Council cannot pay the VAT for a charity as this would set a precedent.

RESOLVED: To decline a request for £10,000 grant funding from St John's House Trust and that the Chair of Finance Committee will draft a letter explaining the reason why the request has been declined.

b) Cerebral Palsy Cymru

The Deputy Clerk/RFO advised Members of a personal interest in this agenda item due to attending Cerebral Palsy Cymru with a family member who receives support from this organisation.

The Chair of Finance Committee suggested that this is not a local charity and noted that although the Town Council had provided £250 grant funding to this organisation 5 years ago, the criteria for allocating grant funding had been tightened in recent years. For this reason, he proposed declining this application.

RESOLVED: To decline a request for grant funding from Cerebral Palsy Cymru

15. Correspondence

a) Email: provisional review of Ruhamah tree situation

It was noted that branches from a tree in Ruhamah Burial Ground are now overhanging a neighbouring property. The Chair of Finance Committee presented Members with an arborist's quote and proposed that the Council should go ahead with a tree survey and condition report in Ruhamah Burial Ground in order to enable Council to make a decision on the trees moving forward.

The Town Clerk explained that although for many years the Town Council believed that it was the custodian of Ruhamah Burial Ground, current BCBC records show that the area is under BCBC ownership.

The Chair explained that in his view this was a technical issue as the ownership was granted to Bridgend Town Council by the church many years ago.

RESOLVED: To approve a quote of £618 to proceed with a tree survey and condition report in Ruhamah Burial Ground.

The Meeting Closed: 12:25pm

Signed..... (Chair of Finance Committee)

Date.....