



**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
MEETING ON TUESDAY 16th JANUARY 2024 AT THE OFFICES OF
BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE,4
SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE COMMENCING AT 7.00PM**

PRESENT:

Cllr D Strachan (Chairman)
Cllr I Agnew (Deputy Chairman)
Cllr D Albone
Cllr G Barrett
Cllr M Foster (ex-officio Member)
Cllr M Knight (ex-officio Member)
Cllr M Russell
Cllr C Thomas

Mr P Tarrant – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Mr R Youngs – Head of Finance and Deputy RFO
Ms F Gumush – Meetings Administrator

Members of the Public – 1

Meeting Formalities:

Following a reminder to meeting attendees, both panel and public, that this is a formal meeting, the Chairman advised that members of the public will be given an opportunity to speak during public open session but not at other times. The meeting is being filmed and by being present attendees are deemed to have agreed be filmed and to the use of those images and sound recordings. The Chairman advised that attendees should not disclose any personal information of individuals as this would infringe the Data Protection Rights of the individual. The Chairman asked everyone to mute their microphones when not speaking.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr M North, Cllr S Sajid

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

b. Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements.

4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No member of the public wished to speak.

5. INVITED SPEAKER

No guest speaker was invited.

6. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

There were no Members questions

7. **MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

The draft Minutes were **APPROVED** as an accurate record of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 5th December 2023 and the Chairman authorised to sign the said.

8. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

9. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Precept Report 2024-2025**

Members discussed the report submitted by the Town Clerk & Chief Executive and Head of Finance & Deputy RFO.

Commenting on the report, Cllr Knight brought forward various points with regards to the public report for a budget proposal of £1.62m. He added the following points:

- There is no mention of the increase to the tax base which is an increase of 0.5%
- He welcomed savings of just over £29,000 but added there was no data explaining where these have been sourced from and it was important to know so that the public understood there were no cuts to key services.
- There is no comparison to last year's budget which was set at £1.53m.
- There is no detailed budget by account code and chairs of the various committees have not yet seen the budgets per committee.
- The comparative weekly figure of 20p per week is irrelevant and the monthly or annual figure should be included in the report.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive responding to the points indicated that the account code information had been shared with Members in a different forum.

The Head of Finance & Deputy RFO pointed out that the annual figure of the increase was established as £10.64.

Cllr Russell commenting on the report indicated that as this was a key decision of the year, all relevant information needed to be brought together in the public domain. Cllr Russell also mentioned that the likely balance sheet should be included in the documents to come to Council so that Members are able to make an informed decision.

Both the Town Clerk & Chief Executive and Head of Finance indicated that they would be happy to consolidate all documents including the balance sheet in the reports to the next Council meeting.

Cllr Russell proposed a recommendation that the F&GP Committee recommend a precept of £1,625,930 for the year 2024-2025, to Council.

Members **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the Council Tax precept for the year 2024-2025 should be £1,625,930.

Cllr Knight also proposed that additional information is provided to the next Council meeting, providing a breakdown by account code showing a comparison against last year's budget.

Members **RESOLVED** to **ACCEPT** this additional proposal.

b. **Quarterly Bank Reconciliations**

The Head of Finance and Deputy RFO thanked Cllr Woodhead for his review and signing off of the bank statements and reconciliations for the quarter end to 31st December 2023.

Members **RESOLVED** to note the report and reviewed the supporting documentation.

c. **Additional Credit Card**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive presented the report and noted that despite the majority of payments being made through bank transfers, as the only card holder it was not sufficient especially if he was absent or on holiday. This view was supported by the internal auditor.

The obvious Officer for the second card should be the Head of Finance & Deputy RFO.

Members **RESOLVED** to **ACCEPT** the recommendation that the second card holder is the Head of Finance & Deputy RFO.

Members commenting on the second half of the proposal with regards to changes to the Financial Regulations, indicated that they did not want to make changes to the regulations piecemeal and asked that the Town Clerk and Head of Finance look over these.

Members **RESOLVED** to **ACCEPT** that the Financial Regulations are looked over carefully for any other changes and updates necessary and the item is brought back to a Council meeting in the near future to enable the issuing of the second card.

10. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

None.

11. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

a. No member of the public wished to speak.

12. **EXEMPT**

None.

The Chairman closed the meeting at **19.27**.