

**MINUTES OF FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8
JANUARY 2013 AT THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD
COURT HOUSE, SAFFRON ROAD BIGGLESWADE**

Present: Cllr D Lawrence (Chaired part of the meeting), Cllr B Briars, Cllr Mrs H Ramsay,
Cllr Mrs M Russell, Cllr I Bond
Rob McGregor – Town Clerk
Sue Crowther – Administrative Assistant
Derek Kemp – DCK Beavers
Members of the public – 4

Also present: Cllr Mrs J Lawrence, Cllr M North and Cllr D Albone

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs W Smith and Cllr G Wilson

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

To receive Statutory Declarations of Interests from Members in relation to:

- (a) Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – there were no interests declared
- (b) Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – there were no interests declared

3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

MP1 A member of the public asked why, with the Reserves and Budget, the current reserve bears no resemblance to the proposed figure.

Cllr D Lawrence said that in relation to the reserves, the Town Council were looking to take on some devolved services from C.B.C.

MP1 said that he realises Council has to err on the side of caution, but there could be greater expenditure.

Derek Kemp said that there is a **minimum** recommended level.

MP2 A member of public said that he appreciates that there is a recommended minimum level, but there is an excess reserve over the recommended £80k. It should not remain indefinitely, is there any idea how this is to be spent?

Cllr D Lawrence said that it has been invested and is earning interest.

4. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

- a. Members received the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes meeting held on 13 November 2012

5. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Finance & General Purposes meeting held on 13 November 2012

Cllr D Lawrence asked Derek Kemp how the quotes for the Asset Management system were progressing.

Derek Kemp replied that he is still trying to obtain another quotation.

6. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- a. **Budgets**

To consider budgets for 2013/2014.

Cllr D Lawrence had prepared the following proposal and this was handed out to all committee members:

1. We place the Precept Support Grant into a special reserve and call it down over a 3 year transition period at a rate of 20315 per annum.
2. We finance the 40630 deficit in the 2013/2014 budget from an increase in the precept of 7.5% on the 5538 Band D equivalent contributors
3. That during the next 3 years that we find additional savings from reduced expenditure of 20315 per annum
4. That if there are further Precept Support Grants from Government in future years that they are used in their entirety to reduce the then precept level

This proposition leaves all options that may be closed off to us if there is a precept freeze and no further Precept Support. It therefore represents sound management for Biggleswade Town.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said that she is not comfortable with raising the precept by 7.5%.

Cllr Russell said that increasing the precept by 7.5% would bring BTC to the attention of Mr Pickles who would use us as an example of an inefficient Council and this could cause problems in the press and maybe local tv.

Cllr D Lawrence said he would welcome this.

Town Council is in the hands of CBC and government how the money is distributed.

Cllr Mrs M Russell proposed an increase of 1.5% and to not put aside the precept grant.

Cllr Russell said that there had been discussions on pink paper, that could not be discussed in a public meeting, but there are many things we can do for the Town with £80,000 re parking for instance. We need that money to improve the facilities in Biggleswade.

Cllr Mrs M Russell went on to say that there should be a small increase gradually over 3 years.

Cllr D Lawrence said that we are not capped this year, but may be next year.

Cllr B Briars seconded Cllr Mrs M Russell's proposal saying that it makes sense, especially with our reserves.

Cllr D Lawrence's proposal was not seconded.

At 8.17pm Cllr D Lawrence resigned as Chair of the Finance and General Purpose Committee.

Cllr D Lawrence and Cllr Mrs J Lawrence both left the Chamber.

Cllr Mrs M Russell asked the Town Clerk to confirm that the committee were quorate.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay took over as Chair for the remainder of the meeting. The proposal put forward by Cllr Mrs M Russell for an increase of 1.5% was seconded.

A vote was taken and all the Committee voted in favour of this proposal, therefore it was **RECOMMENDED** that Town Council implement a 1.5% increase.

Derek Kemp said that this is uncharted territory. Money from Central government via CBC from savings made is part of the Localism agenda. He said he cannot

believe that the money available will disappear overnight. The non-domestic rate has been tweaked and played around with, but not withdrawn.

He could not foresee an increase in the Precept Support; it may be the same next year. It won't disappear quickly. There is no need to panic.

7. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

MP1 A member of the public said that whilst this had been a most interesting debate, this is not full Council.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay confirmed that although this committee has approved the budget, it would be brought forward as a recommendation to the next full Council meeting for consideration by the full Council. MP1 apologized because he had been thinking of the Planning Committee which had comprised all members of the Council

MP1 said that bearing in mind the proposals; could Derek Kemp prepare figures for the various increase options?

Derek replied that he had already done this.