

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the extra-ordinary Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 4th January 2023 at 7pm
(Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Committee)**

Present: Cllrs Anstey, Earth, Goldsmith, Hale, Jackson (Chair), Lewendon, Paton, White and Wilson

In attendance: Paul Goddard, Town Clerk, Mrs M Coatham, RFO

1. To elect a Chair of the Finance & Policy Committee

Members noted the contribution that Cllr Adams had made as chair of Finance and Policy over recent years. Cllr Jackson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore **RESOLVED:** to elect Cllr Millar as Chair [Cllr Millar had confirmed prior to the meeting that he would be willing to stand]. All in favour.

2. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies received from Cllrs Millar and Perkins

3. To receive any Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest.

The RFO noted that the extra-ordinary meeting had been called after the General Council meeting in December where it had been proposed that the recommendations from the November Finance & Policy meeting need to be reviewed prior to the precept request. The budget sheets circulated were the figures from the November meeting without any alteration.

4. To review the recommendation from Amenities for budget proposals for 2022/23

Members discussed the budget proposal and considered whether there were sufficient funds to employ an apprentice. It was noted that no firm decision had been reached about whether the Town Council were in a position to offer a suitable role for an apprentice and the RFO confirmed that there were funds available to cover a position over the next 12 months if necessary. Members agreed that the proposal made in November would stand:

*"The Amenities Committee recommended a budget proposal of £106,600 to be funded from the precept. It was noted that these were provisional proposals subject to the tax base. Discussion took place about the inclusion of the noted forward plan items on the planning sheets. It was agreed to increase the general & grounds maintenance budget allocation by £5000 to include annual repair costs. Cllr Paton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Goldsmith and therefore **RESOLVED:** to recommend a budget proposal for 2023/24 of £111600. All in favour."*

5. To review the recommendation from General Purposes for budget proposals for 2022/23

Members discussed the budget proposal and felt no further changes were required and that the proposal made in November would stand:

*"The General Purposes Committee recommended a budget proposal of £46,612 to be funded from the precept. It was noted that these were provisional proposals subject to the tax base. The RFO advised that given the change in roles of the Information Office staff the allocation of staff costs may need to be reallocated across the committee budgets but the overall cost would remain the same. Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Millar and therefore **RESOLVED:** to agree the recommendation from the General Purposes committee for budget proposals for 2023/24. All in favour."*

6. To review the budget proposals for the Finance & Policy Committee for 2022/23

Cllr Hale expressed concern about the overall increase in the precept and questioned whether the full election cost should be covered in one year or spread more evenly – the RFO noted that if the cost were spread there was no mechanism within council finances to ring-fence that funding should the council overspend in any one year, but could see the benefit of spreading the cost to residents – however this cost (£6k) would not appear in the intervening years and so the precept could

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reduced next year. Discussion took place as to whether the additional loan for works to the town hall roof would actually be required in 2023/24 given the delays in planning. The general consensus was that these works were required and funding should be available. Cllr Paton proposed that the original budget proposal remains and this was seconded by Cllr Goldsmith. Cllr Hale made a counter-proposal to reduce the budget by £4500 from the election budget and spread this cost more evenly over four years, this was seconded by Cllr Earth. A vote took place on the counter-proposal, Cllrs Hale, Earth and Wilson were in favour, the remaining members were against.

The original proposal was re-considered and Cllrs Anstey, Goldsmith, Jackson, Lewendon, Paton and White were in favour, Cllrs Hale, Earth and Wilson against, so the original budget proposal stands:

*“Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Millar and therefore **RESOLVED**: to agree the Finance & Policy committee budget proposal of £159,940 for 2023/24. All in favour.”*

7. To formulate a resolution to go before General Council on 4th January 2023 for the precept request.

As no changes have been made to the budgets, the original resolution amount stands. Cllr Jackson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore **RESOLVED**: to agree the committee's budget proposals for 2023/24 to go before General Council on 4th January 2023. The proposals would result in a precept of £318,152. All in favour.

8. To note any items of Correspondence - none

9. To receive a report from the Clerk or any other relevant business - none

10. To note the date of the next meeting as 25th January 2023

The meeting closed at 7.25pm