

**Minutes of Finance and Staffing Committee Meeting
held on 16th November 2015**

1. PRESENT:

Miss S Lawn (Chairman)	Mrs T. Mancini-Boyle
Mr F. Bowe	Mr L Reeves
Mr J. Emsell	Mr J. Ward

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr T Foreman (Town Clerk), Mrs J Fenn (Responsible Financial Officer)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr I Mackie

2. Declarations of Interest

Mr J Ward declared an interest in item 11 Village Hall update, as a County Councillor.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 19th October 2015

Minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2015 were approved and signed as a true record.

4. Public Session – Limited to 3 minutes per speaker

None

5. Budget 2016/17

Mr T Foreman gave a presentation for the 2016/17 draft budget. The presentation explained the responsibilities of the Council when setting a budget including its statutory responsibilities, need to act reasonably and the need to meet its fiduciary responsibility. The original projection was a 15% increase in the precept, however through income generation and significant restraint in costs it was revised to 9.5%. The increase is through the additional staff posts, loan repayments for the village hall and asset replacement which is overdue. Mrs Fenn explained to the Committee that there had been consultation with Councillors throughout the process and that the draft budget represented an increase of around £6.97 per year for a Band D property, totally 13p per week. The current 2015/16 precept is £68.08, the proposed 2016/17 precept is estimated to be £75.05. Mr T Foreman provided a Band D comparator with the 2015/16 precept of Aylsham at £129.06, Sprowston at £106.59 and Hellesdon at £101.77, demonstrating that the proposed precept is substantially lower than comparator authorities in Broadland. The Committee discussed the draft budget at length, identifying the need to maintain and improve services. Mrs T Mancini-Boyle explained that the amount could vary somewhat with the reduction of the Broadland grant, but exact figures are unknown at the present time. Mr T Foreman clarified that the proposed office would not result in any increase in the precept and in the long term would be a significant cost saving. It was proposed by Miss S Lawn and seconded by Mr J Ward and on a show of hands with all in favour **RESOLVED** to recommend the Town Council accept the draft budget in its current form.

6. Firework Income

Mr T Foreman gave an estimated income of £2659 from the November 5th fireworks display, but explained some invoices were still due and a confirmed sum will not be available until these have been received. The Committee **NOTED** this report.

7. Groundsman Apprenticeship

Mr T Foreman provided an overview of a report to the committee regarding an application by a former work experience student to undertake an apprenticeship with the Town Council. The Committee considered the positive feedback from the work experience placement and reviewed the costs of taking on an apprentice. Mr T Foreman explained that there would be appropriate work available and that grant funding could be sought to help fund the post. The Committee discussed the work available for apprentices and the rules and regulations for young people under 18 to remain in some kind of education or training. The Committee **AGREED** to recommend to the Town Council that it accepting the apprenticeship request.

8. Thorpe St Andrew Parks Project

An update of the Parks Project was provided, with surveys still being received from residents about their park priorities. It was confirmed that a report with these findings would be made available in due course. The Committee **NOTED** this verbal report.

9. Bowls Club Lease

Mr T Foreman updated the Committee on the decision of the Town Council to accept the proposed lease terms with the Bowls Club and to engage a solicitor to draw up a new lease. Quotes for the work had been received with a cost range of £1,300 to £2,400. Mr T Foreman explained that NP Law currently offer 10 hours of legal work for £400 per year, any remaining hours can be held over to the following financial year. Following checks with NP Law it was confirmed that the Bowls Club lease could be drawn up within these 10 hours, leaving some time remaining. The Committee discussed the cost of the NP Law proposal and found that £40 per hour was excellent value. It was proposed by Mrs T Mancini-Boyle, seconded by Mr L Reeves and on a show of hands with all in favour **RESOLVED** to sign up for the 10 hours of legal advice at a cost of £400 per year and use this time to draw up the Bowls Club lease.

10. Fitzmaurice Park Trees

Mr T Foreman provided an update of the decision of the Town Council to fund four mature trees over the few months to meet the requirements of the felling licence granted for the existing trees on the park, but also to mark occasions in the coming months. The cost per mature tree was estimated to be £900 including equipment to stabilise the tree once in position. The Committee considered the cost of the trees and explored funding sources. Mr T Foreman explained that Broadland District Council had been contacted regarding the use of the New Homes Bonus for the new trees, it was explained that this would be suitable. It was proposed by Miss S Lawn, seconded by Mrs T Mancini-Boyle and on a show of hands with all in favour **RESOLVED** to purchase four mature trees; a Dawn Redwood, Tulip Tree, Giant Redwood and Purple Beech for a total cost not to exceed £3,600. This amount is to be taken from the New Homes Bonus fund.

11. Village Hall Update

Mr T Foreman provided a verbal update on the progress of the Village Hall. The current timescales predict that the Village Hall would be completed within the first two weeks of December 2015, with delays caused by the inclusion of additional works. Mr T Foreman also explained that there was some difficulty with the theatrical installation for the Thorpe Players and that the difficulty in getting a site meeting with their technician meant that delays in the electricians finishing at the site were possible. The Committee asked for more information on the delay and a copy of the email from the Thorpe Players technician was circulated. The technician requested the Town Council remove the existing lighting bar and fund an integrated lighting bar which would be suitable for the sockets required, the cost was estimate to be £400 for the new bar. Mr

T Foreman explained that discussions with the contractor had developed and with minor alterations the sockets could be installed on the existing bar. Confirmation on sockets would be required, but the lack of communication with the technician frustrated this process. Miss S Lawn tabled a motion for the Town Council to take on the full cost of the theatrical electrical works at a cost of £4,356.72 plus VAT, and delegate the completion of the works to the Town Clerk in order to prevent any further delays with the electrical installation. In addition any group wishing to use the theatrical electrics will pay a charge of £5 per hour and any items remaining connected or left in situ will be available for all users of the hall inclusive of this charge. This motion was seconded by Mrs T Mancini-Boyle and on a show of hands with all in favour **RESOLVED** to proceed with funding the theatrical electrics installation at a cost of £4,356.72 plus VAT, including a £5+VAT per hour charge for its use and that any equipment sorted or left in-situ to be left connected and will be available to any user group with Town Council liability for damage.

12. Update on Staffing

Mr T Foreman updated the Committee on staffing. It was explained that recruitment was ongoing for the Facilities Assistant post and that it was hoped interviews would be undertaken in the coming weeks. The committee **NOTED** this report.

With no other business the meeting closed at 8.55pm.

Date of next meeting: 21st December 2015

Signed _____ (Chairman)

Date _____