

PUBLIC Minutes of Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council

Finance Governance and Personnel Committee Special Meeting

Tuesday 3rd December 2019

Present: Cllrs David Owens (Chair), Linda Edwards, Robert John (in substitution for Hugh Shepardson), John Hedley Jones and Bob Walpole

Absent: Cllr Peter Freeman

Officers: Huw Thomas (RFO)

Minute Taker: Ed Davies (Administrative Assistant)

(Senior Citizen's Hall, Burry Port Institute 12.35pm – 1.30pm)

1. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllr Hugh Shepardson who was being substituted by Cllr Robert John.

2. To receive members' declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

3. Consideration of the 2020/21 budget

Prior to the full discussion of this item, the Acting Clerk and RFO stated that he had received guidance from Carmarthenshire County Council that all Town Council's should be careful with their increases to budgets for 2020/21.

A budget model document had been prepared by the RFO and was distributed to all present, giving the budget headings and totals for 2019/20, giving a breakdown of the inflationary increase at 1.7% for each based on the current budget heading. It also had information on the actual spending to date, expressed in pounds and as percentages.

Members went through each heading and item in turn, beginning with income. Members agreed to keep both headings with the same target income. Members discussed whether they should keep the income from the Salvation Army donations bin as part of this Committees budget.

Following a discussion Cllr Robert John **PROPOSED** that the income from the Salvation Army donations bin should be moved to the Regeneration and Community Engagement Committee, seconded by Cllr John Hedley Jones.

In the ensuing vote 5 members voted in favour with 0 abstentions and 0 against, it was therefore **RESOLVED** to move the item as stated.

Members also discussed the need to keep "Other income" as a budget item, with a target of 0 in case of unexpected situations during the next financial year.

Chair *DM Owens*

1

09/12/2019

Members proceeded to discuss expenditure beginning with Staff Costs.

Employees

The Acting Clerk and RFO highlighted that he had already adjusted the figure to ensure there was sufficient money to pay for the staff the Council currently employed as well as expected appointments. Members noted that the inflationary increase of 1.7% had been used temporarily but may be corrected to keep it in line with all councils pay increases. It was also noted that the division of the staff costs to the relevant Committee responsible had not yet been done.

Recruitment costs

Members discussed whether or not this item should be adjusted, as it was an unknown entity should new staff need hiring. Member **AGREED** to retain the item budget at £3500.

SLA

Members noted that this was for Human Resources services and was used, as needed to pay. Members **AGREED** to retain it at £1500.

Training

Following discussion Members **AGREED** to retain this item with the budget of £2000.

The next budget section to be scrutinised was Administration.

Audit fee

The Acting Clerk and RFO advised that the budgeted amount was a set fee, although it was noted that there may need to be an increase depending on the inspection costs the new Auditor General led scheme incurred.

Insurance

Members noted that the actual spend was slightly less than that budgeted due to the 3-year deal that the Council had secured with the insurance company. In recognition of this members **AGREED** to set the budget at £14000.

Telephones, subs. & gen. expenses

Members discussed that with a new internet phone system being put in place, there would be a reduction in the telephone bill. Members **AGREED** that the Acting Clerk and RFO enquire with the IT contractor about the final monthly costs and make the necessary adjustment to the budget.

Subscriptions

Members noted that the Council benefitted greatly from the subscriptions it had and **AGREED** to keep this budget heading at the same level.

IT Costs

Following a discussion of the various IT costs incurred, members **AGREED** to adjust this heading to £3500

Photocopying

Although members noted that costs associated with this may be expected to go down over the coming year, they could not be certain and so **AGREED** to set the budget at £800.

Chair 
09/12/2019

Stationery/bank charges

Members discussed that with a greater number of office staff in place costs were unlikely to reduce, but that a review of the products purchased may produce a saving in the future.

Office Equipment

Following discussion, members felt that although there was an expected office move in the financial year ahead, any equipment that may be needed for refitting, would need to be drawn from the projects budget. The Acting Clerk and RFO advised that this could also be used to for unexpected additional equipment that was needed. Members therefore **AGREED** to keep this budget at £300.

Public Notices

Members queried what was this budget heading was for, noting that it had no amount set against it and that there was a separate heading for elections. Members **AGREED** that it would be beneficial for the Acting Clerk and RFO to seek advice on this before a decision was taken on it.

Payroll contracts

Members noted that this would be a fixed cost as it was an SLA with the County Council. The Acting Clerk and RFO would set this amount according to what was billed for.

Translation costs

Members **AGREED** to keep this budget heading at £1000 to cover the SLA with the County Council for their translation services.

Licences

Members noted that this covered a number of licences the Council held to cover its facilities and therefore **AGREED** to increase it in line with inflation to £331.

Election Costs

Members noted that there would be an election due in this financial year and a discussion ensued on how the costs would be met. The consensus was that it would have to be drawn from the General Reserves, however it was also noted that there would be another election in two years' time, and it would be advisable to build the reserves as gradually as possible to cover those costs, which was expected to be around £15000. Members **AGREED** that the Acting Clerk and RFO should seek advice on what costs to expect and the options available to build the reserves before advising the Committee on the budget to set.

Members next looked at the items listed under Civic Expenditure.

Mayoral Allowance

Members noted that this was kept in this budget to keep it separate from Community Engagement spending. All **AGREED** to keep this at £500.

Mayoral Donations/Event attendances

Members noted that this was kept in this budget to keep it separate from Community Engagement spending. All **AGREED** to keep this at £1000.

Members allowances

Members Travel

Members **AGREED** to keep these two items at the level required as they are a mandated item.

Members training

Members discussed thoroughly the necessity of training, noting the limited range of courses available to them at present. Many lamented the lack of planning training amongst members and a wider discussion of how the Council dealt with the planning process ensued. In recognition that there would be two new Councillors following the eventual election, it was **AGREED** to increase this budget to £2000. It was also felt that this Committee should set a training programme for Councillors.

Members IT

Members noted that although most of their IT costs were absorbed by the IT consultants bills rather than separated, due to the two new Councillors soon to join the Council, it may be necessary to provide them with some IT expenses to enable their participation. Members **AGREED** to set this budget item at £520.

ACTION: RFO

4. Any other urgent business at the discretion of Chair

None

Meeting ended 1.30pm