

Minutes of the VIRTUAL Meeting (GoToMeeting ID: 409-802-725) of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE of Bridport Town Council held on Monday 11 January 2021 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Cllr: Maggie Ray (Chairman)

Cllrs: Geoffrey Ackerman Gill Massey
Rose Allwork Martin Ray
Karen Hunt Anne Rickard
Julian Jones Sarah Williams

Also in attendance: Cllr Dave Rickard.

PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

49. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

51. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 November 2020 were confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

It was noted that Minute 35 had contained a spelling mistake in the heading.

52. BEST VALUE AND SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Sub Committee held on 8 December 2020 be received as a correct record.

53. FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2020/2021 – 3rd REVISION

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3578.

RECOMMEND: that the 3rd revision of the estimates for the year 2020/2021 be approved.

The Town Clerk and Finance & Office Manager were congratulated on the preparation of these figures in what has been a difficult year.

54. BUDGET AND ESTIMATES 2021/22

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3579.

In considering this item, members noted:

- The position of the current year 2020/21 revenue budget estimates
- The position on the Town Council's finances held in reserves and proposed Capital Budget
- Use of Reserves
- The recommended revenue budget (estimates) for next year (2021//22) with a commentary on recommended significant variations from this year
- The recommended fees and charges for 2021/22
- Comments of the Budget Working Group
- Medium Term Financial Forecasts
- Summary of Budget Considerations
- Options on the level of precept to fund the budget for 2021/22

The estimates and projects had been considered at the Best Value and Scrutiny Sub Committee and the Budget Working Group.

The Town Clerk highlighted the considerations for members, which included to:

- present a balanced budget
- cater for the impact of COVID-19 on services, expenditure and income.
- maintain and develop existing services provided by the Council.
- maintain appropriate levels of reserves insofar as this is possible during an emergency, and continue to earmark reserves to support project delivery including a capital programme
- make provision for salary increases including an estimated national pay award
- make provision to continue to deliver Town Council Plan projects
- provide continuing support for town events
- maintain grant funding for community projects and support of key organisations through service level agreements – Arts Centre, Museum, Leisure Centre, CAB, Youth & Community Centre, the West Bay Discovery Centre and Indoor Skate Park.
- through the delegated services budget, seek to make ongoing revenue provision to meet some of the costs of discretionary services that are likely not to be delivered by Dorset Council and that the Town Council may need to manage e.g. public toilets

The Town Clerk drew members' attention to the options on the precept and advised that whilst the officer recommendation was to set a balanced budget, it was open to members to consider any level of precept. The options put forward were:

- Option 1: introduce £97,531 from general reserves. This would result in a balanced budget, an unchanged Band D council tax and a reduced precept of £716,531.
- Option 2: introduce a reduced £95,721 from general reserves so that there is no change in the precept from 2020/21. This would result in an increase of 0.25% to £239.42 for Band D council tax and an unchanged precept of £718,341.
- Option 3: reduce the contribution from general reserves by a further £10,000. This would result in an increase of 1.65% to £242.76 for Band D council tax and an increased precept of £728,341.

- Option 4: Fund the entire budget deficit and the effect of the tax base reduction through an increase in the precept of £95,721. This would result in an increase of 13.61% to £271.33 for Band D council tax and an increased precept of £814,062.

The current Band 'D' Town Council charge was £238.82, resulting in the following annual and weekly increases in Council Tax for a Band 'D' Council Tax Payer:-

	<u>Annual</u>	<u>Weekly</u>	<u>Band 'D'</u>
Option 1	£ 0.00	£0.00	0.00%
Option 2	£ 0.60	£0.01	0.25%
Option 3	£ 3.94	£0.08	1.65%
Option 4	£32.51	£0.63	13.61%

Following consideration of the report, it was unanimously RECOMMENDED to Full Council:

- that the draft estimates for 2021/22 be approved as set out in Appendix A.
- that the proposed fees and charges for 2021/22 be approved as set out in Appendix B.
- that the Medium Term Financial Plan be approved as a guide for future years as in Appendix C, noting that each year's budget will be subject to separate approval.
- that the draft capital programme and proposed use of reserves for 2021/22 and future years, as set out in section 4 of the report and at Appendix D.
- that in terms of the precept, Option 3 be approved, as set out above and in section 12 of the report, which would increase the precept by £10,000 to £728,341 with the annual Band 'D' charge increasing from £238.82 to £242.76, the increase being equivalent to 1.65% or 8p per week.

55. MEETINGS CALENDAR

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3580.

RESOLVED: that the meetings calendar be approved as tabled.

56. ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE

The Town Clerk reported that the committee had considered the Rights Respecting project that had been adopted by the Town Council in March 2019 which was now complete. The Steering Group had disbanded, although some members were now engaged in a new project in partnership with the Lyric Theatre, which held the project grant funding. In order to avoid any confusion over responsibility for the new project, the Clerk recommended that the Town Council should end its formal adoption of the earlier project.

The original decision to act as responsible body had been recommended by the Environment & Social Wellbeing Committee to the Finance & General Purposes Committee, due to the financial implications. Any end to the arrangement should follow the same decision-making route, and as a consequence the committee had

recommended to Finance and General Purposes Committee that Bridport Town Council ends its adoption of the Rights Respecting Town initiative.

RESOLVED: that Bridport Town Council ends its adoption of the Rights Respecting Town initiative.

57. REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT AND APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2021/22

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3581, setting out the arrangements for internal audit, and recommending the retention of the existing auditor, Lightatouch Internal Audit Services.

RECOMMEND: that the existing internal audit arrangements continue for 2021/22.

58. RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT: ANNUAL REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3582.

The report set out the Council's approach to risk management, and included a risk management policy that had been updated to incorporate one newly identified risk relating to Asset Transfers.

RECOMMEND: that the Risk Assessment and Management Strategy Policy be approved as tabled.

59. SERVICES ADMINISTERED BY THE TOWN SURVEYOR

The Town Surveyor registered his grateful thanks to all of the grounds staff, who had worked through a challenging year and then reported on the following matters:

- Old Dairy Site
- Works in Bucky Doo Square – water fountain, lighting conductor and bollards
- Outdoor skate park
- Solar car ports
- Asset transfers
- Lengthsman Scheme
- Works to provide a new pavement alongside West Bay Discovery Centre
- Murals at St Mary's Playing Fields

RESOLVED: that the update be noted and that the £2,000 previously earmarked for the Old Dairy Site feasibility study be increased by a further £4,000 from existing budgets, to cover the costs of preparing detailed plans.

RESOLVED: that the report of the Town Surveyor be noted.

60. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Gill Massey reported that the Bridport Millennium Green Trust was to carry out further fencing work on Coneygar Hill and additional tree planting, as a result of full funding acquired, at no cost to the Trust.

61. COMMUNICATIONS

The Town Clerk reported that the Community Fair, due to be held in February, had been postponed, but that an outside event on the Millennium Green in April was being considered.

62. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Town Clerk presented List 4 of the 2020/21 accounts, in the sum of £210,997.80, which had been authorised for payment since the last meeting. This having been tabled for members' information, was approved and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting closed at **8:29pm**.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 15 March 2021