



## Wivenhoe Town Council

**MINUTES** of the Extraordinary Full Town Council meeting held in the Council Chamber on Monday 9 January 2023 at 7.30pm **Chair Approved**

Present: Cllr Kane (Chair), Cllr Aldis, Cllr Multon, Cllr Luxford-Vaughan, Cllr Boughton, Cllr Read , Cllr Evans, Cllr Maltby, Cllr Wenaden, Jo Beighton-Emms (Town Clerk), Emma Buckley (RFO) and Maurice Howard (Accountant) on Zoom.

Public Questions: None

### PART A

EFC/01.23/01 Apologies for absence:, Cllr Andrew and Cllr Burke

EFC/01.23/02 Declarations of interest: None.

EFC/01.23/03 Minutes of the previous meeting: The minutes of the Full Town Council meeting held on 19 December 2022 were proposed by Cllr Evans, seconded by Cllr Multon and approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

EFC/01.23/04 To approve the Councils 2023/2024 annual budget presented by the Finance Committee and set the precept for 2023/2024: Maurice explained that the budget had been reviewed and whilst there will be an underspend for 2022/23 this will be required for projects, the old cemetery wall and the manpower budget.

Cllr Luxford-Vaughan queried the budget for any legal matters relating to planning such as for a planning consultant for the DPD. The RFO reported that there was £4700 in reserves for planning and an underspend for 2022/3 which could be used.

Cllr Read noted that the council shouldn't forget about upcoming projects such as the new cemetery and new allotments.

Cllr Kane said that the reserves have not been broken down but that work can be done on earmarking them for future projects. Rather than update the agreed budget now he agreed that £3000 could be used for legal planning matters from the current surplus if required. Cllr Read asked that this should be minuted.

Cllr Kane said that the proposed increase of the precept is 10%.

The recommendation from the Finance Committee for FTC approval would be to request a precept for the amount of £400,057 for 2023/24. This would increase the band D council tax for parish purpose to £138.41 from £125.60, this is an extra £12.81 per year to the council tax payer. This is a 10% increase on last year's precept. With an expenditure budget for 2023/24 of £480,840.

This he said is justified by the additional expenditure of £34k on manpower with the NALC pay rise, increase in the minimum wage, uplift in salary scales for some staff and increased pension contributions as well as council projects.

The tax base for Wivenhoe remains the same and this increase equates to approximately

£1 a month for Band D properties. He considered this to be reasonable given the rate of inflation and WTC's expenditure. Cllr Wenaden noted that pay rises are not however at the rate of inflation and other bills are going up for households.

Cllr Kane said that the decision on the increase was not made lightly by the Finance Committee and explained that the 10% equates to an increase in the precept of £35k. (for every 1% , the precept is increased by £3500). Cllr Read asked if other options had been considered and Cllr Kane said that 6% was discussed but that would leave a deficit which would not be prudent. Cllr Wenaden asked if other charges, such as hall hire, would have to go up if the precept wasn't increased by this amount. Cllr Kane said that it is better to be prudent with a reasonable precept increase – WTC are in a fortunate position meaning that such difficult decisions don't have to be made, as he is sure they are being made by other councils.

Cllr Aldis noted that this increase will be less than the rate of inflation at the time when it comes into effect. If it is set too low, the council could be caught out- this has happened at other councils which relied on grant funding which dried up. WTC has to be clear on its financial responsibilities such as the old cemetery wall repairs. Cllr Evans noted the costs of the council being carbon neutral although this could be cost neutral over time. Cllr Kane said that all of these points would be included in an article for the next newsletter.

Cllr Kane proposed that the council approves the 2023/24 budget as recommended by the Finance Committee and sets the precept for 2023/24 with an increase of 10% on last year's precept. This was seconded by Cllr Multon with all in favour.

EFC/01.23/05 To approve the continued appointment of Duncan Clark & Beckett Ltd, architects, for work stages 5-6 based on the RIBA Plan of Works: Fee proposal previously circulated

Maurice advised that this was an increase of £3k on the original fee proposal but that this was reflected by the additional work and input from the architect. Also, this increase will reflect the estimated length of the build which will be longer than originally anticipated. Cllr Luxford-Vaughan and Cllr Kane confirmed that they were very happy with the architect's work to date and that this was the last payment to be made to them.

Cllr Read asked if this proposal had been recommended by the Finance Committee, but Cllr Kane confirmed that it was not as it had not been available.

Cllr Luxford-Vaughan proposed that WTC approve the continued appointment of Duncan, Clark & Beckett Architects for work stages 5-6 based on the RIBA Plan of Works. This was seconded by Cllr Aldis, with all in favour.

EFC/01.23/06 Exclusion of press and public: In accordance with Paragraph 1 (2) of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Council is invited to consider if the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item(s) owing to the confidential nature of the business.

## Part B

EFC/01.23/07 To approve the building contractor chosen by the Office and Yard Working Group for the office redevelopment project. The final bid value will be subject to value engineering.

A note of this part of the meeting is held by the Town Clerk.

The Chair closed the meeting at 20.18