



Wivenhoe Town Council

MINUTES of the Personnel and Finance Committee meeting held in the Council Chamber, 77 High Street on Wednesday 10th January 2024 at 7.30pm **CHAIR APPROVED**

Present: Cllr Guy (Chair), Cllr Burke, Cllr Multon, Cllr Hutchings, Cllr Hailes-Morley, Cllr Widgery, J Beighton-Emms (TC), M Howard (Accountant) & E Buckley (RFO)

01.10/01 Apologies for absence: Cllr Wenaden

01.10/02 Minutes of the last meeting: Approval of the minutes for the Personnel and Finance Committee meeting held on 15 November 2023 was proposed by Cllr Multon and seconded by Cllr Hailes-Morley with all in favour.

01.10/03 Declarations of Interest: Cllr Burke noted an interest in the Broomgrove School and Tendring Families Group and will not vote on the Community Fund applications received.

01.10/04 Personnel Update: TC discussed the office administration vacancy and the job description has been produced and shown to the committee. MS would be training and managing the candidate to help assist with the required tasks. Discussions about the role requirements, with the possibility of trialling a late night opening on FTC evenings once a month. The committee discussed how and where to advertise the vacancy. It was recommended that the advert be on social media, Council notice boards and the university to start with and then review if no suitable candidates have applied.

Cllr Burke proposed the vacancy to be advertised and TC to start the recruitment process for the role, this was seconded by Cllr Hutchings with all in favour.

The ground staff had previously requested a trailer, the original quote from a local supplier was for over £5k. After researching a company that Cllr Hutchings had found, a similar trailer has been found for £2,595 (net). The Council would like to support local, but on this occasion the saving is too large to justify the extra expense. Cllr Hutchings recommended that the trailer be purchased with Trailer Tek for £2,595, this was seconded by Cllr Multon with all in favour.

01.10/05 Current 2023/24 Budget Update: MH discussed the budgetary control report (Appendix A).

The current estimated budget is a surplus of £44,298. This is broken down by the planned budget surplus of £7,915 and the estimated year surplus of £36,383. As per the Councils plans the £24,433 income from the police houses is to be allocated to the Capital plan reserve, £800 to the minibus reserve, £1,800 received from Cllr Luxford-Vaughan to the Mede Way play area reserve and £6,100 for the office project. This leaves a predicted underspend of £11,165 to be allocated at year end.

An overview of the predicted surplus is due to higher bank interest being received throughout the year, due to the loan funds being placed in a high interest account and increasing bank interest rates. An underspend on administration budget, due to only one loan repayment being made during the 23/24 year period. Office/yard underspend on overheads, they were originally budgeted higher due to the unknown expense of the ground floor costs. Additional income received from the William Loveless Hall hire, Cemetery and Minibus income.

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This year repairs and renewals budget is overspent by £10k and the payroll budget is predicted to come in on budget due to the increased National Joint Council (NJC) pay award. Any increase to employer pension contributions will not be confirmed until after the precept has been submitted to Colchester City Council.

Discussions about the budget being in surplus during the office & yard project showed the Councils strict budgeting process. This has been a busy year for the Council and many projects have been completed. The overheads for the office building need further checks and the rates may be reassessed now RM vacated. RFO to see if Colchester City Council can advise if the rates will change or can be reviewed. Three month's vacant rates had been allowed for the building this year whilst the building works were undertaken.

At 31.12.2023 the total budget income is £496,455 – 101.5% of annual budget and total budget expenditure is £353,419 – 73.5% of annual budget.

MH reported that the Councils accounts are based on income and expenditure and the total loan repayments are included in the budget and not split between capital and interest payments. The figure for the outstanding loan is required to be reported on the AGAR at year end.

01.10/06 To discuss the Councils 2024/25 annual budget presented by the Finance Committee and set the precept for 2024/25 for approval from FTC: MH discussed the budgetary control report (appendix A).

Two scenarios have been drafted for the 24/25 precept request. These figures include a request from planning for a budget of £20,000, to engage a planning consultant for the garden community hearing. Planning have requested a predicted spend of £15,000 with a £5,000 contingency. There is currently a reserve held of £7,212. The additional £12,675 will be raised by the precept. The exact budget required will not be known until February or March when the hearing will commence. Planning have also confirmed that Cllr Aldis and Cllr Luxford-Vaughan are expecting to be able to attend and answer some questions themselves and that the consultant will only be used if there are questions that require the specialist. Other sources of income will also be investigated from other parish Councils and groups.

The tax base provided from Colchester City Council is very slightly lower than the previous year, when more houses are built in Wivenhoe this is expected to increase.

The two percentages discussed at Finance Committee were 6.06% and 10.16% increases. The 6.06% precept would leave the Council with a planned deficit of £16,335 and the 10.16% increase would break even. The precept requested for 23/24 was also a 10%.

As part of the Councils future plans the budget for 24/25 includes the income from the police houses (estimated at £25,405) to be kept and added to the reserve for the capital plan projects.

A 10.16% increase is £40,358 on to the precept. Colchester City Council have also advised that the parish grant for £6,901 will also be paid this year.

The payment figures for the precept to the community, based on band D are:

	Previous Year	6.06%	10.16%
	2023/24	2024/25	2024/25
Total Band D	£138.41	£146.80	£152.47
Monthly (12 Months)	£11.53	£12.23	£12.71
Weekly	£2.66	£2.82	£2.93
Weekly Increase		£0.16	£0.27

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Discussions were had about the role of the Council and the benefit to the town with the facilities that are available and the future plans for more allotments and a new cemetery. A big factor is the National Joint Council pay scale increase over the past two years, which is not controlled by the Council. The Council and staff are more active in completing projects than in previous years and are developing a future plan for further projects. The cost of living is still high compared to previous year's and this has also effected the Council budgets, for overheads and purchases. The planning budget and the possibility of contesting the development will be a benefit to the future of the town. The projects completed and planned should be widely advertised to the community in the newsletters. Other Councils have increased precepts by 10-30% for the 2024/25 year.

Cllr Burke proposed a 10.16% increase to the precept for the 2024/25 year, to be proposed for Full Town Council approval, this was seconded by Cllr Hailes-Morley with all in favour.

01.10/07 Community Fund Applications: Four community fund applications had been received:

Wivenhoe Bumps & Babies - £350 – This is a group for local families which helps them get together socially and to obtain advice. They have requested the fund be used towards the hire of the meeting venue which is at the church. This would enable them to keep the £1 low admission fee. Discussions about the benefit of the group were made. Cllr Widgery proposed the fund is awarded, this was seconded by Cllr Burke with all in favour to recommend to FTC for approval.

Tendring Families First - £300 – This group help in the two Wivenhoe Schools, it is a local charity providing early intervention and support to children and families with multiple issues including poverty, family breakdown, isolation, mental health and behavioral challenges. The funds would enable two children to receive eight weeks of therapy/counselling. The Finance Committee would like to stipulate that if approved the fund is used for Wivenhoe pupils only. Cllr Hutchings proposed the fund be awarded, this was seconded by Cllr Multon, with all in favour, (except Cllr Burke who abstained from voting) to recommend to FTC for approval.

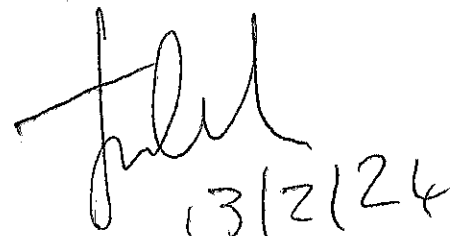
Wivenhoe in Bloom - £300 – This group maintain the flower beds in Wivenhoe, if awarded this would be used to improve the flower beds in Wivenhoe, specifically the corner of Vine Drive and Vine Farm Road, this area would be welcoming to visitors of Wivenhoe and the local community as this is a high traffic flow area. The benefit of the group was discussed, Cllr Hutchings proposed the fund be awarded, this was seconded by Cllr Multon with all in favour to recommend to FTC for approval.

Broomgrove School - The application from Broomgrove School did not stipulate the total grant required. The form was unclear on the project that the school is seeking support for, they mention a larger project with an estimated budget between £50-£100k. The application did mentioned plans for a flower/vegetable plot, so the committee discussed writing to the school in the hope to arrange a meeting with the possibility of donating an allotment plot to the school and to encourage a relationship for the future.

01.10/08 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 items(s) owing to the confidential nature of the business.

Date of next meeting: The committee decided on Tuesday 13 February 2024.

Part A of the meeting was closed at 20:44



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