

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Finance & General Purpose Committee Held at Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury At 6.00pm on Monday 14 January 2019

PRESENT

Councillors A Mosley (Chairman), Mrs H Fraser, Ms J Mackenzie, N Laurens, Mrs P Moseley, A Phillips and D Vasmer.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Gary Farmer (Operations Manager), Andy Watkin (Responsible Financial Officer), Rebecca Oliver (Committee Clerk) and three members of the public.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor P Adams.

57/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Twin-Hatters	All twin-hatted Councillors declared a personal interest in all matters relating to Shropshire Council.
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58/18 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Councillor A Phillips requested that the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 03 December 2018 be amended at point 55/18 to reflect his request for a 'without prejudice' meeting between both parties outside of the judicial review process.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 03 December 2018 be amended as per Councillor Phillips' comments above and then be approved and signed as a correct record.

59/18 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

60/18 BUDGET

60.1 Budget 2019/20

Details of the draft 2019/20 budget had been circulated to members for comment ahead of the meeting. This had been the result of several meetings between Officers and the three group leaders and contributions from members. The Chairman, Town Clerk and RFO reported on the following:

The budget includes a number of projects which will be funded from Neighbourhood Funds, the Revenue Budget, S106 Agreements, LJC Funds, Reserves and the remaining funds from the Solar Project. A list of cross town projects and projects within Wards was circulated and is the result of a prioritisation process. The RFO emailed a full list of projects for 2019/2020 and costings to Members prior to the meeting.

The upgrades to the BMX tracks will be a priority using £18k capital funds. There is a commitment in the budget to making Shrewsbury Greener with improvements to footpaths and cycle ways which reflects the Big Town Plan proposals. The Town Council has committed £50k for the next three years in support of the Big Town Plan which will be matched by the BID and Shropshire Council. This will fund a new co-ordinator for taking the project forward and progress some smaller projects.

The Town Council is now fully funding the Youth Service since the withdrawal of contributions from Shropshire Council, £40,762.26 in the current year. Three Community Centres; Castlefields, Grange Youth Centre and Meet Place, Meole have been allocated £20k for refurbishment work, with the later receiving match funding from Severnside Housing and The Holy Trinity Church, Meole.

Toilet facilities will generally be improved and the lower Quarry Toilets will be redesigned with new access from the Splashpark using £250k Neighbourhood Funds. A further £20k has been allocated to improve the decoration and signage of Butcher Row and Hills Lane toilets. An annual fee of £5k has been budgeted for setting up and decommissioning the Splashpark.

There will be additional expenditure in wages this year due to a pay award per NJC, which ranges from 2% - 5.5% but for majority of staff will be 3%, plus the results of the Job Evaluations. A review of the living wages scales is being conducted nationally and the RFO showed the pay scales and how they will be regraded. The large increase in wages from 2017/18 is due to new positions created and the mechanic this year has cost a net amount of £10k.

Expenditure will also be increased by inflated costs (15%) for electricity and gas as advised by West Mercia Energy.

The circulated list of projects will form the basis for a medium term plan for a further two years which will also include the potential Quarry redevelopment and new staff accommodation.

There have been no changes to the Fees and Charges besides the increase in line with inflation. These have been approved by the R&L committee.

After all the above the net income/expenditure balance is £525, therefore a balanced budget for 2019/20. We are forecasting a slight surplus in the current year, which will be confirmed when the accounts are completed in May.

Councillor Phillips supported the budget but commented he would like to have seen funds allocated to support start-up businesses in Shrewsbury. Councillor A Mosley commended the staff for producing a balanced budget.

60.2 Precept for 2019/20

To meet the expenditure requirements a precept of £1,233,477 was required which would see a Band D rate increase from £45.63 to £50.21, which generates £1,233,447. It was however noted that 60% of all properties are Band B or below therefore the increase would account for 7p a week. Members noted that at £50.21 the Town Council's Band D Rate was below both the national and Shropshire average.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) That the revenue expenditure budget be set at £3,452,414**
- (ii) That a Precept of £1,233,447 be levied against the ratepayers of Shrewsbury**

61/18 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That Press & Public be excluded on the grounds that the consideration of the following items may involve the likely disclosure of confidential information (s1(2) Public Bodies (Admission of Meetings) Act 1960).

As with the previous meeting, Councillor A Phillips reported that he shall not be involved in the following item as he did not wish there to be any perceptions of him prejudicing any decision at the meeting. He subsequently left the meeting and returned only to be notified of the outcome.

62/18 LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

The Town Clerk provided Members with an update of the Judicial Review proceedings being brought against Shropshire Council with Shrewsbury Town Council being listed as an Interested Party.

The Town Clerk provided details of the defence submitted by Shropshire Council. Members discussed the level of involvement in this case given that proceedings have not been brought against Shrewsbury Town Council.

It was also noted that the Grievance Committee had met to review the decision of the Town Clerk not to provide information presented to the Committee at its December meeting on the grounds that the information presented was considered to have legal & client privilege. The Committee upheld the decision taken by the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That details of the Judicial Review Proceedings against Shropshire Council be noted;**
- (ii) That the Town Council do not seek involvement in the case as this time**