

Yeovil Town Council



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Policy, Resources and Finance Committee

The Meeting... **Policy, Resources and Finance Committee**

The Time... **7.00pm**

The Date... **Tuesday 29 January 2013**

The Place... **Town House, 19 Union Street, Yeovil**

If you need this information in large print, Braille, audio or another language, please ring 01935 382424



Alan Tawse

Alan Tawse
Town Clerk

23 January 2013

To: All Members of the Policy, Resources & Finance Committee:

Martin Bailey

Kris Castle

J Vincent Chainey

Philip Chandler (Vice-Chairman)

Clive Davis (Ex-officio)

Bridget Dollard

David Dollard

Tony Fife

Jon Gleeson

John Hann

Andrew Kendall

Tony Lock (Chairman)

Manny Roper (Ex officio)

Darren Shutler

Alan Smith

Equality Act 2010

The *general* public sector equality duty places an obligation on a wide range of public bodies (including town and parish councils) in the exercise of their functions to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The protected characteristics are:

Age

Disability

Gender Reassignment

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Pregnancy and Maternity

Race

Religion or Belief

Sex

Sexual Orientation

A G E N D A

Public Comment (15 minutes)

1. MINUTES

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 November 2012.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4. CORRESPONDENCE

PAGES

5. APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT AID

(Circulated separately)

6. CAPITAL FUND

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7. ESTIMATES - 2013/14

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8. YEOVIL COUNTRY PARK

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9. FINANCIAL STATEMENT – OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2012

10 – 36

Public Comment (15 minutes)

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee will be requested to pass a resolution excluding the press and public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted

10. STAFFING ISSUES

(Confidential report attached for Members only).

6. CAPITAL FUND

Introduction

A copy of the Capital Fund is attached at page 6. The sum of £5,503 is currently available for allocation to new capital schemes.

Former Goldcroft Allotment Site

Future sources of funding include the proceeds arising from the sale of surplus land at the former Goldcroft allotment site.

In November 2009, the Town Council agreed that approval be given to the acceptance of the highest bid received for the disposal of the above site subject to the bidder providing formal satisfactory evidence within the next two weeks of their ability to fund the acquisition.

The response was reported to the following meeting of the Town Council at which it was agreed that the disposal to the highest bidder be permitted to proceed.

The disposal of the site proceeded as expected and, following completion of the S.106 agreement, the Planning Authority issued a planning certificate on 23 July 2010 granting outline planning approval for the residential development of the site. In accordance with the agreed disposal arrangements, a draft contract was prepared by the Town Council's solicitor and submitted to the purchaser's solicitor.

Following on from the March 2011 Town Council meeting, the outstanding issues were progressing towards a conclusion and, as reported to last October's Town Council meeting, contracts were expected to be exchanged at the agreed price in the near future whereupon it was anticipated that the purchaser would apply for detailed planning consent or reserved matters approval within the following two months.

The position was reviewed at the February 2012 Town Council meeting, at which a strategy was agreed to resolve the outstanding issues. The disposal arrangements were further reviewed by the Town Council in May and a revised plan of action drawn up to advance the matter.

The conclusions of a Working Group set up to review the disposal of the land; to consider future options and to make recommendations on the best way forward were considered at the September meeting of the Town Council and unanimously approved, and a further report was submitted to last December's Town Council meeting.

The report set out further developments that had taken place regarding the disposal of the above land following the adoption of a strategy by the Town Council and details of the progress made in relation to the course of action agreed at the September 2012 meeting of the Town Council were set out in the report along with copies of the bids received to date in response to the recent marketing exercise.

Following detailed consideration of the bids received and the options available, the Council agreed that no action be taken, at this stage, to dispose of the site, and that the land continue to be marketed and an update report be submitted to the March 2013 meeting of the Town Council.

Former Ski and Activity Centre

Another potential source of funding is the former ski and activity centre should the Town Council decide to dispose of the freehold as part of the redevelopment proposals.

Alder King were instructed to market this site on behalf of the Town Council and, following a meeting between the appointed representatives of the Town Council and Alder King, arrangements were made for a revised draft development brief to be produced and submitted to the July 2008 meeting of the Town Council for consideration. The final brief was adopted at that meeting and the property was marketed and expressions of interest invited.

Details of those received were reported to the Town Council in March 2009, and Members have approved a process for assessing these bids and reporting back on their respective merits with a view to a final decision being taken by the Town Council in due course on how best to proceed.

All expressions of interest received to date have now been considered by the Steering Group set up to give initial consideration to the matter, and details of the bids received along with their views have been submitted to the Town Council.

Although the bid put forward by the Yeovil Community Church in September 2009 for the redevelopment of the site as a creative arts centre was supported in principle, the proposal was unable to be progressed at that time owing to factors beyond the Church's control.

In May, the Town Council agreed to concentrate on remarketing the property following a review of the current development brief, which will be submitted for Members' consideration following the conclusion of the planned investigation by the Council's Property Agent.

The result of this exercise was reported to the October meeting of the Town Council at which approval be given to Alder King entering into discussions with representatives of the organisation commissioned to prepare an indicative masterplan for the nearby urban village - as part of the emerging Core Strategy (Preferred Options) - with a view to exploring the feasibility of the site being included in the masterplan.

The outcome of these discussions was reported to the December Town Council meeting at which it was agreed that representations be made to the Planning Authority seeking the inclusion of the site in the emerging masterplan for the nearby urban village. Representations have since been made and, as reported to the last Town Council meeting, it has recently been announced that the site has been included in the masterplan, copies of which have been circulated to all Members.

Further feasibility work is planned, and further updates awaited on the progress of the future actions. The Town Council will be involved in the planned further feasibility work on the ski slope site.

Other Sources

Any funding beyond these sources will need to be in the form of a loan from the Public Works Loan Board, applications for which are considered on their individual merits and subject to funding availability.

Play Areas

The District Council has confirmed that it has committed the following capital funding at the present time:

Play Area	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Totals
Turner's Barn Lane						NIL
Yew Tree Park		£80,000				£80,000
Monks Dale Park			£15,000			£15,000
Milford Park					£20,000	£20,000
Summerhouse View						NIL
Preston Park					£12,500	£12,500
Howard Road Park						NIL
Total	NIL	£80,000	£15,000	NIL	£32,500	£127,500

The District Council has indicated that these figures are based on anticipated match-funding of 50% from the Town Council and that the revised list is a result of a districtwide prioritisation exercise that took into account the overall finance available.

Given that the current programme is coming to an end, the District Council has been asked to consider the suggested phasing of proposed future upgrades having regard to the condition of the play equipment at all of the sites managed by the Town Council and the availability of contributory funding from the District Council.

This work involved a further audit of the play areas by the District Council's Play and Youth Facilities Team, which has now been completed. Following planned analysis and the drafting of suggested priorities, the results will be reported to the March 2013 meeting of the Grounds and General Maintenance Committee, with the views of that Committee and the financial implications for the Town Council being reported to this Committee later that month.

Turning to the existing programme, the District Council has re-affirmed that it has committed capital funding totalling £32,500 towards their share of the planned play area improvements in the 2011/12 capital programme at Milford Park (£20,000) and Preston Park (£12,500) and the Town Council has agreed to make matching contributions from the anticipated capital receipt arising from the planned disposal of the former Goldcroft Allotment Site. In the event that the receipt is delayed, the Town Council has agreed that its contribution towards these two schemes would be met from unallocated balances in the General Reserve instead.

As previously reported, the Milford Park scheme has now been completed and the Preston Park project is due to be delivered in 2013. The above table has been adjusted to reflect this revision.

The District Council have confirmed that s106 contributions amounting to £5,463 have been secured from a local developer towards the Preston Park project, which

will enable an enhanced scheme to be delivered at that location. A project plan and sketch designs for the play area have been agreed by the Grounds and General Maintenance Committee, and a similar steering group has been formed to help deliver this project – in consultation with the local community.

General Reserve

As previously reported to the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee, the General Reserve stands at £282,474 and, after taking into consideration agreed carry forwards totalling £39,193 from 2011/12, the net unallocated balance is £243,281.

The Committee has agreed that, as a matter of policy, a minimum balance of £150,000 remains uncommitted in the General Reserve to meet any unexpected revenue needs beyond those which could be funded from contingencies over the forthcoming financial year.

Now that the Town Council has agreed to make a similar commitment (£32,500) in respect of the Milford Park and Preston Park schemes, this effectively reduces the unallocated balance of the General Reserve to £210,781 pending the disposal of the Goldcroft site. This is £60,781 (40%) above the recommended minimum balance.

Recommendations

Members are **RECOMMENDED:**

- (1) to note the position concerning the Capital Fund and the General Reserve;
- (2) to note the current position regarding the rolling programme of play area improvements, and to await a report from the District Council on the suggested phasing of proposed future upgrades.

(Alan Tawse, Town Clerk - 01935 382424)

7. ESTIMATES 2013/14

Introduction

At the December meeting of the Town Council, consideration was given to the setting of the precept for 2013/14, and it was

RESOLVED

- (1) that the 2013/14 *draft* revenue estimates for the various Service Committees of the Council, summarised below and attached to the minutes of the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee meeting held on 27 November 2012 be *provisionally* approved and adopted; and

Committee	Revenue Estimate
Planning and Licensing	£5,027
Grounds and General Maintenance	£242,952
Promotions and Activities	£77,553
Buildings and Civic Matters	£105,579
Policy, Resources and Finance	£392,552
Total	£823,663

- (2) that *final* approval and adoption of these estimates and the setting of the Town's precept for 2013/14 be deferred and determined at the February 2013 meeting of the Town Council.

Subsequent Developments

Following on from the December Town Council meeting, written confirmation was received of the Government's ongoing intention to include town and parish councils in the Council Tax base calculations that need to be undertaken by all district councils (as billing authorities) as part of the Government's decision to introduce Localising Support for Council Tax from 1 April 2013.

The Government has also confirmed that it will not be applying the council tax referendum rules to town and parish councils this year.

Impact of Government's Changes

The consequence of these new arrangements is that the tax base of the Town Council (as a local precepting authority) has been reduced by 14.6% from 10013.66 to 8552.28. This decrease of 1461.38 effectively means that the Town Council's income from its current share of the Council Tax precept is reduced by £132,445.

To help offset the impact of this change, the Government has introduced a *voluntary* arrangement under which billing authorities agree the amount of

funding, allocated initially to such authorities, to be passed down to local precepting authorities.

South Somerset District Council has agreed to allocate £119,965 to the Town Council for 2013/14, **which means that the overall net income of the Town Council has been reduced by £12,480.** Under the new system, this allocation will be reviewed each year by the billing authority.

Setting of Precept

As previously reported, the District Council has confirmed that the Town Council may set the Town's precept for 2013/14 at its meeting on 5 February 2013. This is the latest date by which the precept may be fixed. Since the last meeting, the Yeovil Crematorium and Cemetery has now set its budget for 2013/14 and the Town Council's contribution has been calculated at £97,764.

This makes the overall draft budget £921,427, which equates to a 1.5% increase in the 2012/13 budget. However, the shortfall arising from the above changes in the current funding arrangements means that the annual charge per Band D Property would need to increase from £90.63 to £93.71 – an increase of 3.4%.

Whilst this impact could be lessened by a contribution from the General Reserve, this would not provide a sustainable solution as a similar contribution would need to be made each year to bridge the gap in income that has arisen as a direct result of the Government's changes, which account for 1.9% of this increase.

As mentioned above, the Government has confirmed that it will not be applying the council tax referendum rules to town and parish councils this year. This provides additional flexibility for such authorities to set their budgets taking into consideration the impact that the ongoing new funding arrangements will have on their finances.

Should the Town Council decide to set a Band D charge of £93.71, this would represent an increase of £3.08 per year – which equates to 6p per week.

This approach, which is supported by the Chairman, represents a sustainable solution as the additional funding would be built into the base budget to help meet ongoing revenue costs.

Recommendation

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to note the above-outlined developments and to make recommendations to the forthcoming Town Council meeting on the setting of the 2013/14 budget and the precept.

(Alan Tawse, Town Clerk – 01935 382424)

8. YEOVIL COUNTRY PARK

Members will recall that the Committee has awarded a grant of £5,000 to South Somerset District Council (Countryside Service) towards the construction of a new visitor centre in Yeovil Country Park, subject to the necessary funding being secured to enable the project to proceed. (Minute 8/52(c) refers). This funding has been earmarked pending a final decision being made on the delivery of the project.

The estimated total cost of the initiative is £300,000 and ongoing efforts are being made by the District Council to raise the necessary funding to enable the project to proceed.

A shortfall of £150,000 has been identified and it is proposed that an application be made to the Big Lottery's Reaching Communities Buildings Fund to secure the outstanding amount. However, applications from local government bodies are restricted to town and parish councils.

The Countryside Manager has approached the Town Council and requested that the Council makes an application for funding from this source with the assistance from officers of the District Council.

Members will recall that a similar partnership approach has been successfully taken in the past and has secured grant funding towards various projects as part of the Breathing Places initiative. This has been used to create improved access and has helped to fund various events in the Country Park.

Making such an application would not place any financial obligation on the Town Council and, if supported, the intention would be for the Town Council to work in partnership with the District Council and the Friends of Yeovil Country Park to put forward a bid to meet the identified shortfall.

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to note and support the above request.

(Alan Tawse, Town Clerk – 01935 382424)