

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 23 July 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



QUALITY
TOWN
COUNCIL

Alan Tawse

Alan Tawse
Town Clerk

17 July 2013

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

Martin Bailey

Kaysar Hussain

Peter Brock

Andrew Kendall

Philip Chandler

Mike Lock (Ex-Officio)

Bridget Dollard

Tony Lock (Chairman)

David Dollard

Wes Read

Tony Fife

Manny Roper (Ex Officio)

Jon Gleeson

Darren Shutler (Vice-Chairman)

John Hann

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

Race

Disability

Religion or Belief

Gender Reassignment

Sex

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Sexual Orientation

Pregnancy and Maternity

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 25 June 2013.

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. NALC – FUTURE STRATEGY

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8. LOCALISING COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT AND COUNCIL TAX

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9. BEST VALUE

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10. FINANCIAL STATEMENT – APRIL/MAY 2013

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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

11. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

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(Confidential report attached for Members only)

12. STAFFING ISSUE

(Confidential report to follow 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 the October 2011 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 2012 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.

In March, the Town Council received an update report and, after giving careful consideration to the options available, adopted a revised strategy that will progress the matter whilst protecting the Council's interests. An update report was submitted to the Town Council in May at which it was agreed that the land be withdrawn from the market pending the outcome of the ongoing planning process.

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 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 were considered by the Steering Group set up to give initial consideration to the matter, and details of the bids received along with their views were 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 2010, the Town Council agreed to concentrate on remarketing the property following a review of the current development brief, which were 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 2010 meeting of the Town Council at which approval was 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 2010 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 were made and, as reported to the January 2012 Town Council meeting, 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 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, which was completed earlier this year, involved a further audit of the play areas by the District Council's Play and Youth Facilities Team and the results - including an analysis of the findings and suggested priorities – were reported to the March 2013 meeting of the Committee (Minute 8/167 refers) along with the views of the Grounds and General Maintenance Committee on the matter.

A copy of the updated programme is set out below:

Play Area	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Totals
Preston Park	£12,500						£12,500
Summerhouse View		£10,000					£10,000
Kingston View			£7,750				£7,750
Grass Royal				£10,000			£10,000
Fielding Road					£5,000		£5,000
Turners Barn Lane						£10,000	£10,000
Total	£12,500	£10,000	£7,750	£10,000	£5,000	£10,000	£55,250

These figures represent the anticipated contributions from the Town Council and assume that matching contributions will be made by the District Council.

Allocations have been made by both Authorities for 2012/13 (Preston Park) which is currently underway, and the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee had identified how it will meet the proposed contribution of £10,000 towards the 2013/14 scheme (Summerhouse View). This will be via combination of planned underspends totalling £7,851 being carried forward to 2013/14 with the balance of £2,149 being met from savings to be identified by the Grounds and General Maintenance Committee in their current budget.

However, the Town Council's proposed contribution is subject to the District Council making a matching contribution towards this scheme, and a decision on this is awaited.

The Committee has also agreed to the funding of the remainder of the programme being considered as part of the budget-setting process leading up to the fixing of the 2014/15 precept.

Existing Programme

As previously reported, the Preston Park project is due to be delivered in 2013. The above table has been adjusted to reflect this change in timing.

S106 contributions amounting to £5,463 have been secured from a local developer towards the Preston Park project, along with a contribution of £5,000 from Cllr Dave Greene who has agreed to allocate part of his County Councillor delegated health and well-being budget, which will enable an enhanced scheme to be delivered at that location. A contribution of £1,500 has also been made by the Well-Being of Yeovil Association, making a total overall working budget of £36,963.

A project plan and sketch designs for the play area have been agreed by the Grounds and General Maintenance Committee, and a steering group has been formed to help deliver this project – in consultation with the local community. Tenders are being sought for the final design and the scheme is due to be completed during this summer.

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 recently completed Milford Park scheme and the ongoing Preston Park scheme, 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
- (3) to await confirmation of the District Council's funding towards future schemes included in the programme.

(Alan Tawse, Town Clerk - 01935 382424)

7. **NALC – FUTURE STRATEGY**

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has produced a draft consultation document (copy attached at pages 8 to 13) entitled “A New Future: Developing the Strategy”. This paper was adopted by National Council earlier this month for consultation with member authorities.

The closing date for comments is 19 August. All comments made will be considered by the Executive Committee on 10 September and by the National Council on 1 October.

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to consider this document with a view to making a response.

(Alan Tawse, Town Clerk – 01935 382424)

A NEW FUTURE: developing the strategy

Draft for consultation

Introduction

This draft Future Strategy has been prepared by the Strategy Group established by the Executive Committee. The Group consists of all the members of the Executive Committee and the Chairmen of the Finance and Policy Committees, supported by the Chief Executive.

The Executive Committee is determined to

- **achieve a new and effective strategy for the National Association and the sector as a whole**
- **ensure that the strategy is delivered successfully**
- **secure a new culture of unity and co-operation.**

All initiatives will be contained in a Strategic Plan and Implementation Programme, with quantified objectives and based on targets and outcomes, and with clear monitoring and reporting systems.

The immediate next steps will be:

- *Consideration of this Draft Strategy at National Council in July*
- *Circulation of the Draft Strategy to County Associations and all member councils for consultation and consideration, between July and October*
- *Finalisation of the Draft by the Strategy Group and Executive Committee*
- *Final approval by National Council in October*
- *Preparation of the Implementation Programme for National Council December 2013*
- *Full implementation from April 2014*

The task

Our task is to

- Assess what we do, at all levels
- Determine our priorities
- Identify quantifiable outcomes
- Determine how to deliver these outcomes
- Work within available resources

Key objectives

There are three key objectives, the foremost of these is

- **Delivering quality services to County Associations and member councils**

The other key objectives are

- **Creating new local councils and aiding membership growth**
- **Promotion and representation**

These three objectives will form the basis for a new culture in our sector, with the National Association, County Associations and member councils all working together with common purpose.

1. Objective 1: Delivering high quality services

- 1.1. We need to review current priorities in service provision to assess what our councils need, both at National and County Association level.
- 1.2. We will ensure that all services to members are prompt and effective.
- 1.3. The general principle for service delivery will be that
 - NALC will provide national initiatives, general frameworks, guidance and advice
 - County Associations will provide primary service delivery and support to councils.
- 1.4. It is to be understood that not all County Associations will need to provide all services themselves. They could be outsourced to other County Associations or agencies as may be effective for members.
- 1.5. Current arrangements for 'Direct Access' councils will continue.
- 1.6. The National Association will provide legal services, policy advice, information bulletins and publications, and improvement & development initiatives; these in turn will be delivered locally by County Associations. Each County Association will of course continue to provide any additional services and support which it may choose to offer to both its members and to other County Associations as appropriate. It is to be understood that the NALC legal service is multifaceted in providing briefing notes, assessments of Government legislation, and detailed legal advice to members through their County Association. Some County Associations use additional local legal services to supplement their services to members.
- 1.7. We will:
 - sustain our work in providing support in the core service areas of policy, improvement and development, legal advice and support, accounts and audit support and information, publications and communications.
 - ensure that there is effective operational consideration of how best to deliver these services:
 - by NALC
 - by County Associations, particularly where services need local delivery
 - outsourced from commercial organisations
 - as part of Government-based initiatives with partner organisations
- 1.8. assess and consult on new support services including:
 - planning advice, including information and regular updates
 - property management (both buildings and facilities)
 - commissioning services
 - business planning (with templates/toolkits)
 - risk assessment and good practice
 - human resources and employment
 - guidance on mediation
 - IT development, guidance and promotion
 - income generation (including guidance on bidding)
 - local lobbying and campaigning
- 1.9. develop more national and regional workshops and seminars on specific policy or practitioner issues for delivery by County Associations and by NALC.
- 1.10. ensure that there is a clear statement of 'who does what' in our delivery of services at all levels.
- 1.11. ensure that there is a comprehensive information base about membership and electorate numbers and a scheduled review of all publications, notes and the like.

2. Objective 2: Creating new local councils

- 2.1. This is an objective of crucial importance and we regard it as a major initiative in its own right. Two thirds of the electorate live in (primarily urban) areas without any town, parish, community or neighbourhood council. It is a sustainable way of ensuring growth and increased influence for our sector. Devolution to the local level is supported by all the major political parties.
- 2.2. Successful achievement of this objective is of prime strategic importance. It would provide:
 - empowered communities
 - greater weight for the sector and its organisations
 - increased income
 - a radical change in the composition of the sector and its organisations.
- 2.3. Creating new councils has been a key objective for many years, with hundreds of new councils formed, especially in urban areas and as a consequence of the shift to unitary principal authorities.
- 2.4. The Government is highly committed to this initiative. While it will not impose a 'top-down' requirement on communities, it is very keen to support communities in developing a new local council. Ministers have already stated their position and a new Government national programme to support the creation of new local councils is expected to be announced shortly.
- 2.5. To pursue this objective, we will:
 - work with CLG and Cabinet Office for this objective
 - aid County Associations working with District and Unitary Councils
 - assist effective lobbying of local MPs
 - support the development of local teams to campaign and support communities and new councils
 - seek to reduce or eliminate current restraints at principal authority level
 - work to change current attitudes in some principal authorities
 - work with the LGA as appropriate
 - provide national co-ordination and support

3. Objective 3: Promotion and representation

- 3.1. It is an important function of the National Association to promote the local councils sector, with appropriate lobbying and campaigning.
- 3.2. We have had a successful political programme for over twelve years, building the profile of the sector and the National Association from one of near obscurity to being part of every political party's objectives. Major legislative change and new powers and a much improved positioning of the sector across the political spectrum has been achieved.
- 3.3. While need to sustain our current position on the political agenda, using targeted approaches, it is time to build better and more effective services for our members.
- 3.4. We will:
 - sustain our engagement with Government
 - sustain our work with the political parties and those preparing their manifestos and future policy programmes
 - demonstrate our effectiveness by promoting our achievements
 - develop public awareness of local councils
 - seek Government support for public promotional activity
 - ensure co-ordination and cohesion in promotional and political activities at NALC, County Association and member council levels
 - ensure that all member councils are fully aware of the issues of the day and able to participate more effectively in the development of policy and its implementation
 - ensure effective communication in promotion and representation at all levels
 - ensure that our policies are developed democratically, with full participation and consultation, and member-led
 - ensure we have national political unity, at all levels, in our external representations
 - work with new partners, especially Third Sector organisations and the business sector, for sponsorship, joint working and research, especially in the areas of community development, planning and housing, community safety and economic development.
 - consider the scope, and our capacity, for greater links with the European Commission, particularly in relation to programmes and funding
 - expand our promotional work with the media
 - expand our programme of high-profile events

4. Resources

- 4.1. This strategy is based on working within available resources; but resource generation is an area of fundamental importance if new initiatives are to be delivered.
- 4.2. We will seek new income generation, including
 - New and funded Government programmes on specific initiatives (*there is currently progress on the SCA, community budgeting and, particularly the creation of new councils*)
 - New events and conferences, both general and on specific policy and practitioner issues
 - Commercial sponsorship
 - Joint initiatives with the business sector, particularly in housing, planning and economic development
 - Joint working with national Third Sector bodies on initiatives for community development

- More profitable outcomes from publications
- Securing improvement and development funding from Government (a proportion of the 'top sliced' funding available to the LGA)
- Possibly securing rental income from better use of property assets.

5. Changing our culture and process

- 5.1. While many of our councils have made huge modernising steps forward, many still operate according to the traditional role of a parish council, not fully developing their potential with their community. This needs to be addressed through improvement and development initiatives.
- 5.2. At county level, there is diversity among County Associations, in both levels of resource and operational capacity. Some have radically modernised their operations, moving to more of a business model; others still operate in a very traditional way. Some County Associations are under resourced and should be encouraged to take services from neighbouring County Associations whilst still maintaining their independent County identity. Clearly direct subsidies are not appropriate but monies and resources could be diverted from NALC to support such initiatives as it is generally in those areas where membership growth needs positive assistance to secure the future and vibrancy of the sector. It should be a major objective of NALC to see healthy and strong County Associations. New models of support, including opportunities for income generation, as already evidenced by some County Associations, for County Associations need to be developed and rolled out; and new meaningful Service Level Agreements are needed at all levels.
- 5.3. At the National Association level, we will concentrate on service delivery and operational working. Once the strategic objectives and programme of initiatives are clear, and are operational, then that will be the time to review our democratic structures aimed at providing a simplified and streamlined arrangement with flexible and dynamic leadership functions fit for this century. More attention needs to be spent on services and developing the entire sector, rather than in looking inwards at structure; too much time has been spent by the leadership on this over the past few years.
- 5.4. We also need much greater ease and frequency of communication, including through a developed website, with County Associations and member councils. The key principle should be that all elected members and officers, at national, county and member council level, should have easy and open access to information.
- 5.5. We need to expand and promote our improvement and development work. Much has been done to improve the quality and development of clerks, with latterly more emphasis on councillor training and development. Progressing an Improvement and Development Board for the sector could provide a focus for work in this area. This needs to be carried out in conjunction with CLG, DEFRA and other such agencies, but most of all with active participation of the County Associations as the primary delivery agents.
- 5.6. To succeed, it is actions such as those below that will require detailed consideration and targeted action.
 - Concentrate on Service Delivery to Members with inclusion of performance metrics and periodic reviews
 - Target achievable policy objectives, with dynamic priorities as political flavours change, to show progress rather than attempt to deliver on an ever widening spectrum.
 - Seek to secure CLG 'top slice' funding to promote improvement and development within the sector.

- Develop further models of support for County Associations, including opportunities for income generation
- develop our communications, primarily through a constantly evolving website, and ensure frequent two way communication with member councils and County Associations.
- make effective use of IT, at all levels, including support and guidance to councils

6. Constitution

- 6.1. This has been a continuing debate for over fifteen years. We need clarity and consensus. We need in due course to review the Constitutional relationship between the National Association, County Associations and member councils.
- 6.2. There are three main options:
- i. A single national organisation, with member councils and county branches as the base of its democratic structure, and with integrated management and operational structures
 - ii. A change to make County Associations the members of the national body, effectively a national federation of county associations, with councils being members solely of the County Association
 - iii. Maintaining the status quo, with NALC as a national association of member councils, grouped into largely independent county associations.
- 6.3. This is a very important issue and it needs very careful consideration. We propose that there is further review and consideration once the new strategy for the future is in place.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. National Council is invited to consider this report and endorse it for consultation with County Associations and member councils.

8. LOCALISING COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT AND COUNCIL TAX

The Forum established by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to discuss all matters relating to council tax met for the first time last month, and an update on the matters discussed is set out below:

Council Tax Partnership Forum

The Council Tax Partnership Forum had its first meeting on the 5 June. The Forum brought together the previous Reference Group and Delivery Group and would meet quarterly to discuss all matters related to council tax. Membership of the Forum includes the Local Government Association, Cipfa, IRRV, London Council and representatives from local authorities. Also on the Forum are representatives from Society County Treasurers, Society of District Treasurers, Police Authority Treasurers Society, Fire and Rescue Authority and Association of Chief Police Officers. Minutes of the first meeting will be published shortly.

Council Tax Freeze

In his Spending Round statement, the Chancellor announced that funding would be available to principal authorities to freeze council tax for a further two years, covering 2014-15 and 2015-16. The key details are as follows:

- The grant is available to local authorities (including the GLA), single purpose fire and rescue authorities, and Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). Town and parish councils are not included.
- The freeze grant will operate in the same way as the 2013-14 scheme in that authorities and PCCs which freeze or reduce their Band D council tax will receive a grant (additional to their Revenue Support Grant) equivalent to a 1% increase on their Band D council tax levels.
- The grant will be based on the local authority taxbase which would apply having disregarded the reduction in the taxbase due to localisation of council tax support – so it would be a higher taxbase figure than the actual one and means the 1% grant would be worth more than a 1% rise in council tax.
- The funding will be baselined, so the grant for authorities which freeze in 2014-15 will be paid in both 2014-15 and 2015-16.
- A separate grant for 2015-16 will be paid to authorities which freeze in that financial year.
- This means that authorities and PCCs which freeze in both years will receive a 1% council tax equivalent grant in 2014-15, and 2% in 2015-16.

It was also confirmed in the Spending Round that the 2011-12 and 2013-14 freeze grants would be baselined into 2015-16.

Council Tax Referendums

The Chancellor also announced in the Spending Round that the Government will propose a council tax referendum threshold of 2 per cent for 2014-15 and 2015-16.

It is intended that the Secretary of State will set out full details of the 2014-15 referendum principles in parallel with the announcement of the provisional

Local Government Finance Settlement later in the year. Final principles will be subject to approval of the House of Commons.

LCTS Administrative Subsidy

The Housing Benefit Administration subsidy is paid to local authorities towards their cost in administering both Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

As you know, since April 2013 Council Tax Support replaced Council Tax Benefit. To reflect this, in 2014-15 20% of the subsidy, which relates to Council Tax Support only claims (i.e. cases where Housing Benefit is not also being claimed), will be transferred from DWP to DCLG (in respect of England) and Devolved Administrations. Councils will therefore receive the subsidy in two separate funding streams. DCLG with the Council Tax Partnership Forum is looking at the distribution of the 20%.

LCTS Funding

Some local authorities wanted clarification about funding for LCTS. The LCTS funding was included within the Retained Business Rates system, with a proportion in local share and the rest in Revenue Support Grant. The funding is one of many elements making up Local Government resource, and is not ring-fenced.

The LCTS funding was identified in Y1 (2013-14) at a local authority level but Ministers agreed that it would not be identifiable thereafter. It is entirely for local authorities to decide how much they are prepared to spend on Council Tax Support, which is why allocations for future years will not be separately identifiable.

Consulting on year 2 schemes

Paragraph 5 of Schedule 1A to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires principal councils to consider whether, for 2014-15, the scheme is to be revised or replaced. Where the scheme is to be revised or replaced the procedural requirements in paragraph 3 of that Schedule apply. Individual authorities will need to consult their lawyers about how their authority complies with these requirements.

Setting of 2014/15 Precept

South Somerset District Council has undertaken to provide all town and parish councils with a timetable of events to assist with the setting of next year's precept, and is planning to hold a workshop in the autumn to help with the process.

Recommendation

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to note the outcome of this meeting and to await further updates.

(Alan Tawse, Town Clerk – 01935 382424)

9. **BEST VALUE**

Unlike their county and district counterparts, town councils are free to choose their own performance indicators. These play an important part in the Best Value process, as they are the yardsticks by which the targets set are measured.

To make sure indicators chosen give a balanced view of performance, the Government has suggested using five dimensions of performance:

- Strategic Objectives
- Cost/Efficiency
- Service Delivery Outcomes
- Quality
- Fair Access

The Council has set corporate health performance indicators as well as setting additional ones for each service. The Policy, Resources and Finance Committee has adopted a list of corporate performance indicators compiled from the mandatory list that all principal councils must adopt.

Service related indicators are just as important. The Council has agreed that these are best chosen by the Service Committees - who are already responsible for monitoring and reviewing the services within their purview. Last year, all the Service Committees were asked to put forward a performance indicator for each of the major services/functions under their control and their achievements have been reported during the current cycle of meetings.

As far as this Committee is concerned, the major services are the processing of grant applications and the management of support services.

Grant Applications

The Town Council considers all grant applications on their individual merits and, irrespective of the outcome, we should strive to ensure that applicants feel satisfied with the process. With this in mind, we agreed last year to set ourselves a target of achieving an 80% satisfaction rate with the grants process.

The actual figure achieved was 100%, which endorses the process we have adopted.

Corporate Service Indicators

In addition to measuring how well we perform in providing direct services, we need to measure how well our support services are provided. The following areas of performance are being measured on an annual basis with a view to seeking real and lasting improvements. The previous year's achievements are in brackets after each indicator.

Customers and the community

- *Percentage of citizens satisfied with the overall service provided by their authority – TBA (83.3%)*
- *Percentage of those making formal complaints satisfied with the handling of those complaints – 100% (100%)*

Management of Resources

- *Percentage of Invoices paid in 30 days – 96.2% (97.5%) (100% of invoices paid to terms)*
- *Average time taken to answer the telephone - 10 seconds (10 seconds)*
- *Percentage of letters where a full response is made within ten working days – 93.0% (93.3%)*

Total Spending

- *Total net spending per head of population - £31.89 (£31.41)*

Staff Development

- *Proportion of days lost to sickness absence – 1.8% (2.9%) (national average is 4.1%)*
- *Average number of days staff training per employee – 3.5 days (3.6 days)*

Public Access

- *Number of the authority's buildings open to the public – 3 (3)*
- *Number of such buildings in which all public areas are suitable for and accessible to people with a disability - 3 (3)*

It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Committee notes this year's achievements and sets similar targets for next year's performance.

(Alan Tawse, Town Clerk - 01935 382424)