

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Finance Committee** meeting held in the Council Chamber on **Wednesday 28th November 2018 at 7.30pm.**

Present: Councillors:- Andy Stokes (Chair), Pam Barrett, Janet Jones, Pamela Forbes, Ron Fox and Judith Hart (Town Clerk/RFO).

For the purpose of this meeting, Councillors Janet Jones, Pamela Forbes and Ron Fox were co-opted onto the Finance Committee to transact the business specified in the agenda.

Part I (Open to the Public)

18/49. Questions raised by the Public: None

18/50. Apologies: Cllr Dan Simpson.

No apologies received from Cllr Huw Cox

18/51. Declaration of Interests: Cllr Andy Stokes declared a non-pecuniary interest re Agenda Item No.7) Smaller Grants Minute No.18/55 All Sing Sunday

18/52. To approve as a correct record and sign the Minutes of the Meeting held on 29.09.2018:

Signed and approved by Cllr Andy Stokes

18/53. Budget Analysis Reports 01.09.18 - 30.09.18 and 01.10.18 – 31.10.18: Noted

18/54. Bank Payments Reports and Bank Statements 01.09.18 - 30.09.18 and 01.10.18 – 31.10.18: Noted

18/55. Smaller Grant Applications:

The following smaller grant applications were approved within the spending limits of this Committee:

- (i) **Participate Arts – ‘All Sing Sunday’** - It was noted that approximately 45% of those attending were not from Buckfastleigh. Donations were also received from the participants. Members agreed that this should be reflected in the amount of grant awarded - £250
- (ii) **Buckfastleigh Methodist Church** – New PA system and carpet: The Methodist Church is used for both religious services and community events. The Town Council does not award funding for religious purposes, but the community benefit was acknowledged by Members - £250.
- (iii) **Participate Arts – ‘Window Wanderland’** - This is a community arts project using residents’ windows to create a trail through the town which would encourage an increased footfall and support local businesses. It was suggested to do this after Christmas - £400.
- (iv) **Dartmoor Skies** – Astronomy Events - Interactive activities in the town mixed with a unique and fun science experience. Members expressed concern regarding subsidising non-residents but agreed this initiative would encourage visitors to the town - £500.

It was suggested that a programme of events for 2019 using the Culture and Events budget could be created.

- (v) **Buckfastleigh Wild Warriors** – An afterschool wildlife and conservation club for 7 to 11-year olds. It was noted that a small amount of funding has already been received from the CVS SOUP event for this project - £500.
- (vi) **Buckfastleigh Sports Club** – Improvements and renovation to the clubhouse. Members agreed to support this application but suggested that the club applies for more substantial funding from Sport England - £500.
- (vii) **Buckfastleigh Christmas Fair** – Health and safety/security support for the December 2018 event - £250.

Members were pleased to receive such a diverse range of applications on this occasion.

18/56. Draft Budget and Precept 2019/20:

The Chair highlighted that the Council Tax Support Grant has now been withdrawn with effect from 2019/20 which has created a £9,000 deficit in the budget. The £10,000 Awards for All grant received in 2017 contributed to the Hello Summer programme of activities for 2017 and 2018. To continue funding this very popular project will now have to be met from the precept for 2019.

The proposal for 2019/20 is to increase the precept by 6.63% to cover the loss of the Council Tax Support Grant and the Awards for All grant which would amount to a 15p per week increase for a Band D household.

The following proposals were noted:

- Increase the grants budget to cover larger grant applications
- Increase the perennial grant to the Town Hall to meet the costs of transferring to a new board of trustees
- Increase the youth activities budgets to meet the loss of the Awards for All grant. It was noted that there is significant community support for this project
- Increase the budget for the Citizens Advice outreach service to cover additional costs
- Proposal to reduce the Culture and Events budget to reflect that the Colourscape experience will not be returning for a third year
- Reduce the Community Development Grant for 2019/20 although the Council may need to re-visit this when reviewing the 2020/21 budget

It was acknowledged that the Town Council will have an underspend from the 2018/19 budget, but there is a need to maintain the current income as there will not be enough capacity or resources to continue with the projects and services provided or supported by the Council.

The Clerk suggested that there is now a need to increase the reserves to meet the costs of the unresolved VAT issue for the Town Hall, the transfer of the Town Hall to a new board of trustees and to fund the predicted increased costs for the Citizens Advice outreach service. The surplus from the 2018/19 budget could be placed into reserves and ring-fence for the above purpose.

Decision: Recommendation to the December full Council meeting to increase the precept by 6.63% for 2019/20 and transfer the predicted surplus from the 2018/19 budget into reserves.

18/57. Review of Financial Regulations:

Members agreed to all the revisions and additions highlighted by the Clerk in the 2018 version of the Financial Regulation.

Decision: Recommend to the December full Council meeting to resolve the revised Financial Regulations

The Clerk also highlighted the lack of cooperation and communication with NatWest Bank who still refuse to acknowledge the statutory status of the Town Council, update the signatories to the bank accounts or the legal requirements which have to be met to satisfy the annual audit

Decision: Recommendation to the December Town Council meeting to transfer all banking to HSBC who already provide a satisfactory service to the Town Hall and Institute charity.

It was noted that the outstanding VAT issue concerning the status of the Town Hall has been referred to a VAT specialist, but no response from HMRC has been received to date.

18/58. Communities Together Fund:

Cllr Andy Stokes suggested submitting a joint application with Ashburton Town Council for the engagement of a community health volunteer.

Action: Cllr Stokes to pursue.

It was also suggested that an annual joint meeting with Ashburton Town Council could be facilitated to develop joint projects such as community development training in first aid and child protection.

18/59. Correspondence: None

18/60. Items requiring Urgent Attention: None

Meeting closed at 8.57 pm.