

Marlborough Town Council



Finance and Policy Committee

Minutes of an Extraordinary meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee held Monday,
4 December 2023 in the Court Room, Marlborough Town Hall at 8pm

PRESENT	Councillor Caroline Thomas	Chair
	Councillor Nicholas Fogg	Town Mayor
	Councillor Andrew Ross	
	Councillor Mervyn Hall	Vice Chair
	Councillor Jane Davies	
	Councillor Kelvyn Shantry	
	Richard Spencer-Williams	Town Clerk
	Dawn Whitehall	Corporate Services Officer
ALSO		
PRESENT	Councillor Mark Cooper	Observing
	Neil Goodwin	Marlborough.News

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.

352/23 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from **Councillor Cleasby**.

353/23 DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations.

354/23 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

355/23 MINUTES

Min No 303/23 – Policies Update - Amend the resolution to change 'required' to 'stated', to read: "RESOLVED: that policies, unless otherwise stated, should be reviewed every three years"

RESOLVED: that, with one amendment, the minutes of the meeting held 31 October 2023 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair

356/23 COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL PRIORITIES

Members noted the Committee's and Full Council priorities for 2024-25.

It was noted for clarification that Amenities & Open Spaces Committee Priority 7 – Parking arrangements on Marlborough Common – related to extending the area with protective matting beneath the grass to prevent rutting and similar damage to the surface of the Common when used for informal parking at events and was not related to creating any permanent car park or any changes that would be subject to Defra approval.

357/23 STAFF PAY SETTLEMENT

Members noted the pay award settlement for 2023-24 which had been within budget.

358/23 BUDGET AND PRECEPT

Members noted the Town Clerk's report and considered the budget and precept requirements for 2024-25 for recommendation to Full Council.

A detailed spreadsheet was considered with three columns reviewed separately.

Although indicative % increases to the precept were shown on the spreadsheet, Members noted that the tax base¹ was as yet unknown but would increase, so any % figures were the maximum possible and would reduce once the tax base was confirmed by Wiltshire Council after 13 December. This figure would therefore be known and corrected when presented to the Full Council meeting on 8 January.

- Column 1 - operational requirements – agreed as presented.
A total budget of £1,050,251 with £864,070 required after deducting budgeted income (maximum precept rise of 4.4%)
- Column 2 – operational requirements plus additional (discretionary) operational requirements
 - Iseki ride-on mower - £3,000
 - Kawasaki mule - £5,360
 - Traffic management - £1,500
 - Property maintenance – increase from £40,000 to £45,000
 - Highways - £1,000

Agreed with one change – line 4028 Property Maintenance reduced from £45,000 to £40,000

Comment – whether maintenance for the Marlborough Community and Youth Centre should be reinstated as a separate line, or whether records of actual spend by building/cost centre was sufficient to be able to track the cost of maintenance at this building, which was owned by Wiltshire Council.

¹ the number of Band D equivalent dwellings in a local authority area

- Column 3 – operational requirements plus additional operational requirements plus new projects/proposals. A further new item, the reinstatement of a budget for Heritage (line 4317), was also put forward at the meeting to be considered alongside other new items:
 - Youth Work - £30,000
 - Re-enactment event - £10,000
 - Heritage - £1,000

It was agreed to reduce Youth Work to £15,000 on the proposal of recruitment mid-year followed by consideration of full year funding going forward; increase the Heritage budget from £0 to £1,000 with any underspend in year contribution to the Heritage EMR. No funding was allocated to the proposed re-enactment event in the absence of any costed proposal.

This would make the final impact on the precept (at current tax base) a total budget of £1,077,111 (£890,919 after deducting income) - a 7.69% maximum increase for a Band D property.

It was noted that the next step is for the budget to be recommended by this committee to Full Council; a process which gives Councillors a final opportunity to present a case for alternative funding decisions before the precept is finalised.

RESOLVED: to recommend to Full Council the budget as proposed in the Town Clerk’s Report, and as amended, with a precept rise of 7.69%

ACTION: investigate any opportunities for outsourcing, and compare with other similar Councils

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm

Signed:
Chair

Date: