

NOTES OF THE ONLINE MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11TH NOVEMBER 2020 AT 7.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors C N Parker (Chairman)
M Hocking (Vice Chairman)

P Bullivant Mrs A Jones
Mrs C Bunday M Joyce (Dep Mayor)
D Howe M E Ryan
R Jenks (Mayor)

Councillors in attendance: R Hayes

In attendance: Philip Rowe – Town Clerk
Alexandra Robinson – Principal Administrator

SP41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Mrs Karen Crout and Mrs Lesley Sheffield and Ms Samantha Scott, Deputy Town Clerk.

SP42. INTERESTS

None declared.

SP43. MINUTES

The minutes of the Strategic Planning Forum held on 9th September 2020 were received and signed as a correct record.

SP44. COUNCIL TAX BASE

The Chairman referred to the email, previously circulated, from Mr Martin Flitcroft, Chief Finance Officer, Teignbridge District Council on the proposed amendment to the Council Tax Base for 2021/22. The Chairman noted that the Coronavirus Pandemic had been an unprecedented situation which had impacted all councils nationwide.

Councillor Colin Parker reminded Councillors how the Council Tax Base figure was calculated year on year. He noted that the government restrictions to curb the spread of the virus had impacted many forms of employment causing a stark rise in the number of benefit claimants, together with a reduction in the development of completed dwellings this had significantly reduced the overall council tax base, known as the 'Multiplier' as used by council's as part of their Precept calculation.

Members noted that Mr Flitcroft had intended to forewarn local town and parish councils of this likely impact albeit he was unable to provide full details at that stage. From the correspondence to date, councils were advised to prepare for a reduction in the Council Tax Base of between 2.5 and 2.7%. On that basis the Chairman advised Members were to take the reduction into consideration when preparing the Council's budget for 2021/22.

The Chairman invited comments from Member, who raised the following key points:

- The differential between growth rates of new dwellings between towns and parishes across Teignbridge;
- The differential in the number of benefit claimants across the whole of Teignbridge District;
- Queried the Government funding available to District authorities to meet the shortfall in council tax payments or increase in benefit claimants and whether that would reduce the impact on local town and parish councils;
- Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC) would meet with the Larger Council Committee on Thursday 12th to review in more detail;
- Requested additional information from Teignbridge District Council when it was available and ideally prior to the next meeting of the Strategic Planning Forum to be held on 25th November 2020; and
- The national impact of local town and parish funding.

Members noted that the Chief Finance Officer had given notice of the likely reduction in the Council Tax Base in advance of local councils setting their precept but that more detailed information would be welcomed as soon as it became available.

Accordingly, it was;

AGREED that the email from Mr Martin Flitcroft, Chief Finance Officer, Teignbridge District Council on the likely reduction on the Council Tax Base for 2021/22 be hereby, noted.

SP45. BUDGET AND STRATEGY 2021/22

A. Review of Draft Budget 2021/22

The Chairman introduced the **Budget Summary for 2020/21 and draft budget for 2021/22**, previously circulated, and invited Members to work through the budget and raise questions or seek clarification.

The Chairman introduced each Committee and cost centre within the draft budget and Members raised the following points under specific budget lines:

Page	Budget Line	Item	Proposal
	Admin F&A		
1	100-4140	Insurance	Legacy cost of insuring 9 Devon Square
	100-4142	Newton's Place Insurance	Fig for 2021/22 is £12,948
	Administration		
	101-1002	Pavement Café Licence	Fee suspended for 12 months
	101-1076	Precept	DALC subscription taken at source
	101-1077	CIL Income	Fund costs of 41 Wolborough St
2	101-4000	Salaries	Potential overspend, pay award
	101-4020	Staff Travel	New staff training costs
	101-4085	TIC contribution	Legacy invoice previous year
	101-4091	Christmas Light Contract	Repairs to owned equipment and additional tree decoration
	101-4104	Website Refresh	Reduce by £6k not needed 21/22
	101-4107	IT Support	Move to Newton's Place and installation of Wi-Fi higher than anticipated

3	101-4115	Office Equipment	Additional cabinets and shelves
	101-4122	Legal & Prof Fees	Sale of Town Hall & purchase of Church Court
	101-4169	Telephone maintenance	New system includes all costs except line rental
	101-4999	Miscellaneous Exp	Transfer of proceeds of sale of Town Hall to Capital Investment a/c
4	Town Hall		
	102	Cost centre	To be renamed Newton's Place for 2021/22
	102-4150	Rates	Rates for Devon Square £10,475 and new valuation awaited for Newton's Place
5	102-4174	Broadband and other similar costs	The running costs attributed to Newton's Place (will differ from the former Town Hall) but will be populated as they are known to give true reflection of costs.
6	Civic		
	103-4220	Election Costs	Cost of election to fill Bradley Ward vacancy May 2021
	103	Civic Events	Largely unspent with exception of Remembrance Sunday
	Town Development		
	110-	Town Dev Expenditure	largely unspent with the exception of some Christmas events
7	St Leonard's Tower		
	120-4161	Repairs-equipment	Electrical works and clock refurbishment unplanned expend.
8	No changes		
9	No changes		
10	Museum		
	201-	Museum expenditure	Budget used to fulfil additional items needed for new exhibition
11	Events		
	210-	Events Expenditure	Largely unspent due to COVID restrictions but two key events planned for 2021/22 & resources will be key in promoting the town's economic vibrancy (post COVID)
12	Newton In Bloom		
	211-	Newton In Bloom Expen.	Largely unspent due to COVID restrictions
13	No changes		
14	Other Amenities		
	290-4507	Grass verge cutting	Income £8,500 received from DCC
15	No changes		
16	No comments		

B. Strategy for the Budget Period 2021/22

The Chairman noted that clarity was needed from Teignbridge District Council on the likely implications of a reduction in the Council Tax Base for 2021/22 before the Council would be able to finalise its budget and make recommendations for the Council's Precept figure for 2021/22. However, with the information available at that time the Chairman suggested that as a minimum consideration should be given to three key areas; the reduction in Council Tax Base of between 2.5 and 2.7%; an inflationary rise (based on the RPI) of 1.5% and a likely salary increase of up to 3%. Initial indications suggested that this would be a rise in the budget of 4.8% overall and would allow the Council to retain a position where it could support the town once the restrictions were lifted and help renew the economic vitality in the town. The Chairman further reminded Councillors that these were unprecedented times and the measures, faced by all councils nationally, would be felt by all.

Councillors echoed their support for the Chairman's comments on the situation and expressed their concern at service cuts at either County or District levels, where upon the Town Council would wish to be in a position to be able to review those services vulnerable to cuts. In order for town and parish councils to be able to assist they would need to be informed of such proposals in advance of setting the Precept which was substantially earlier than the County and District authorities.

Councillors were keen to support the economic vitality of the town and be able to provide events for the town once the Government restrictions were lifted.

In conclusion the Chairman advised Members that he anticipated further information from the Chief Finance Officer of TDC within the next couple of weeks however the draft budget would be prepared based upon the information available at that time and he would defer further consideration until the next meeting of the Strategic Planning Forum.

Following a lengthy discussion among Members, accordingly it was;

AGREED to note the draft budget and authorised the Clerk to make the revisions as discussed for a revised draft budget to be presented at the next meeting of the Strategic Planning Forum on 25th November 2020 together with a draft Budget Report for consideration in advance of the Finance and Audit Committee on 13th January 2020.

Members further recorded their thanks to the Clerk and Principal Administrator for their preparation of the budget and associated papers which helped to inform and clarify the Council's position.

SP46. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on 25th November 2020.

Chairman