

NOTES OF THE ONLINE MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 2nd DECEMBER 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 Corney-Walker	M E Ryan
Mrs K Crout	Mrs L Sheffield
D Howe	

Councillors in attendance: R Hall
R Hayes

In attendance: Philip Rowe – Town Clerk
Sam Scott – Deputy Town Clerk
Alex Robinson – Committee Administrator

Prior to the start of the Meeting the Chairman welcomed the return of the Deputy Town Clerk, Sam Scott following her period of convalescence post-surgery. Members offered their good wishes to Ms Scott.

SP47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor R Jenks (Mayor).

SP48. INTERESTS

None declared.

SP49. MINUTES

The minutes of the Strategic Planning Forum held on 11th November 2020 were received and signed as a correct record.

SP50. BUDGET 2021/22

A. Update from Chairman on Future Service Provision

The Chairman advised Members that following the last meeting of the Strategic Planning Forum, the Mayor wrote to the Leaders of Teignbridge District Council and Devon County Council inviting them to alert the Town Council of any services that may be cut, reduced or redirected due to the financial restrictions placed upon them following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Mayor offered both Council Leaders to discuss the likely impact on those services with the Town Council at their earliest opportunity to allow the potential for them to be continued without a break in service.

The Chairman added that whilst all tiers of Government were working through such extraordinary times that it was important that all approached the likely changes in the spirit of co-operation to ensure the best outcome for the residents of Newton Abbot. The Chairman invited comments from Members who raised the following key points:

- Meeting of District Councillors at Teignbridge District Council scheduled later that week;
- Non-statutory services currently provided by the County and District Authorities may be vulnerable to impact of financial restrictions;
- Services impacted by cuts or reduction should be transferred without loss of provision;
- Welcome opportunity to discuss implications with the County and District Authorities to protect services vulnerable to cuts;
- Consider services that may attract income for the Town Council and those that would benefit the residents of Newton Abbot;
- Possibility of Unitary authorities under a Government restructuring;
- Encourage discussion with other authorities as a positive opportunity to embrace possibilities for delivery of services to residents of Newton Abbot;
- Reminded Members that services the Town Council had already taken on, such as the maintenance of the public toilets, would have otherwise been lost permanently;
- Be prepared to take on additional services for the benefit of the town; and
- Timescale and approach to discussions and devolvement of services to the Town Council.

The Chairman summarised the discussion among Members and accordingly it was;

AGREED that following the meeting of the District Council scheduled later that week, that the Clerk would invite the Leader of Teignbridge District Council, Councillor Alan Connett to join in further discussion with the Mayor, Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Strategic Planning Forum and the Town Clerk at his earliest convenience.

B. The Chairman introduced the **Budget Summary for 2021/22**, previously circulated.

The Chairman reported that further to Minute 20/11(SP45) that those items requested for adjustment or amendment to the budget had been made and had been incorporated into the draft 2021/22 budget. The Chairman invited Members to review each page of the revised draft budget and to raise questions as needed. Members made further consideration on the following areas of the budget:

- ❖ Estimated Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Income for March 2021 and beyond;
- ❖ Salary adjustments for the current year due to increased establishment and likely pay-freeze for 2021/22;
- ❖ Investment of the capital receipt for the sale of the former Town Hall;
- ❖ Improvements to grassed area of the War Memorial;
- ❖ Extension of Idverde Contract for provision of floral displays and plant watering;
- ❖ Improvements to Allotment infrastructure based upon CIL income;
- ❖ Ongoing management of grass verges on behalf of Devon County Council; and
- ❖ Trustee for Devon Air Ambulance Funding for landing sites in Newton Abbot.

Following a lengthy discussion among Members, accordingly it was:

AGREED that a) the Clerk be authorised to write to Teignbridge District Council to enquire as to the estimated CIL receipts for March

2021 and beyond; b) to approve in principle the improvements to the Allotment infrastructure dependent upon future CIL receipts; and c) it be **recommended** to the Finance and Audit Committee on 13th January 2021 that the contract with Idverde for the provision of floral displays and plant watering be extended by a further four years subject to a flat-rate 5% increase in fees over four years.

SP51. DRAFT BUDGET REPORT FOR 2021/22

The Chairman reminded members that their consideration of the Budget and Budget Report would be in order to make a recommendation to the Finance and Audit Committee on 13th January prior to a resolution to be passed by the Council on 27th January 2021 to agree a Precept for the Council for 2021/22. The Chairman invited the Town Clerk to summarise the Draft Budget report, previously circulated and invite comments from Members.

The Town Clerk highlighted the key elements of the report and provided further explanation and clarity on the affects of the negative council tax base. The overall implication was a net reduction in precept of approximately £17,500. In light of this Members discussed the options available to the Council for the consideration of the budget and Precept for 2021/22.

Following consideration of the Draft Budget Report for 2021/22 and a discussion among Members:

The Town Clerk presented a budget summary statement, as outlined in section 4.7 of the Report to the meeting as follows:

2021/22	£
Budget	891,766
Add Reserves @ 25%	222,941
Add CTSG recovery	nil
Add Contingency	nil
TOTAL	1,114,707
Less cash at bank	200,000
Precept for 2021/22	914,707

The Town Clerk presented the summary as a realistic but modest budget for 2021/22. The proposed budget and Precept would have the effect of increasing the Council Tax for a Band D property by 0.11p per week (£5.70 per annum). Arising from a detailed discussion the following budget would be recommended to the Finance and Audit Committee on 13th January 2021, as represented by the illustrated table below:

Multiplier 2020/21	Annual Band	Inc/Dec £/p	Cost per wk	Band D cost per Day	Diff in in P/wk	Total Precept
8,324.3	£107.63	£5.70	£2.07	30.0p	0.11	£914,707

Councillors expressed their sincere thanks to the Town Clerk for the preparation of the Draft Budget and Budget Report which greatly assisted Members in their consideration of the matter. Following consideration accordingly it was;

AGREED that the Strategic Planning Forum **recommend** the Budget and Precept for 2021/22, as set out below, and the Draft Budget Report for 2021/22 to the Finance and Audit Committee meeting to be held on 13th January 2021:

Precept £ 2021/22	M/plier 2020/ 2021	Actual Band D cost	Band D Incr. (£ & p)	Band D % Inc.	B / D Cost Per week £	B/ D Cost per day (p)	Diff p per week	Total Precept £
914,707	8,324.3	107.63	5.70	5.6	2.07	0.30	0.11	914,707

SP52. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on 19th May 2021.

Chairman