

# Chudleigh Town Council

# **Town Hall & Finance Committee**

# Tuesday 12 December 2023: 7.00pm:

## Public participation:

None.

## In attendance:

Councillors Lillington (Chair), Webb, McCormick, Mathews, Riley, Sherwood and Bowling. Also in attendance John Carlton (The Clerk).

## Apologies:

Councillors Hadley and Bayley

## Declaration of members’ interests:

The Clerk issued a blanket dispensation to allow councillors to debate and vote on the budget, presept and section 137 grant awards.

## Confirmation of Part 1 and 2 of the meeting:

The Chair advised that there would be no part two

## Urgent matters brought forward by the Chair:

None

## Review of action points from meeting of 12 September 2023.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| No | Action required | Outcome |
| 1 | Provide Coucillor Lillington with an acceptance of office declaration | Completed |
| 2 | Provide Coucillor McCormick with an acceptance of office declaration | Completed |
| 3 | Arrange for full council to formally accept the external audit report. | Ratified by full council on 2 October 2023 |
| 4 | Advise Chudleigh Together organiser that the Council has agreed that they can transfer funds received from a section 137 grant to Volunteering in Health | Completed |
| 5 | Circulate the 2019 review of the effectiveness of internal audit to councillors | Completed |
| 6 | Review of the effectiveness of internal audit to be placed on the agenda for the December committee meeting | See item |
| 7 | Identify proposed expenditure items for 2024/25 budget to the Clerk | Completed |

## Finance report.

1. Councillors were shown the aged debtors report. The Clerk advised that he would be writing off the small credits on the report.
2. Councillors had received the budget variance report to 31/10/23 in advance of the meeting. They noted that income was above expectations but that there were significant overspends on grounds maintenance, CCTV and play parks.
3. Councillors received details of account balances as of 11 December 2023. See appendix 1.
4. The Clerk provided councillors with details of the Council’s projected general reserves and CIL funds as at 1/4/24, alongside projected spending plans for these reserves. See appendix 2. Councillors indicated that they were content with these plans.

## Consideration of interim internal audit report.

Councillors were content with the actions proposed by the Clerk to the report’s findings. **(Action point 1)**

## Section 137 community grants 2023.

The Clerk advised councillors that Chudleigh Artists had withdrawn their grant application, leaving ten applications for councillors to consider. After lengthy debate they settled on the following awards:-

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Community group | Award recommended | Purpose |
| Chudleigh Against Racism | £300 | Raising of awareness and community training. |
| Chudleigh Carnival | £500 | Entertainment and activities. |
| CCP | £750 | Renovation of walls in internal area. |
| Karen Cole | £268 | Recycling of medical blister packs. |
| Chudleigh Library | £600 | Creating a warm space plus miscellaneous community services. |
| Petanque Club | £1,000 | Replacement of storage shed and miscellaneous repairs. |
| Scouts | £1,000 | Hardship fund and activities. |
| Twinning | £750 | Hosting Troarn visitors. |

It was agreed that the awards listed should be submitted to January full council for ratification. **(Action point 2).**

In addition, the Clerk was asked to invite Vince Wilson (CAB) to the committee’s March meeting to discuss the new digital service and to discuss whether the council could facilitate in person advice services in the town. **(Action point 3).** Councillors also wanted to review the grant process at the March committee meeting. **(Action point 4).** They also wanted successful recipients to report back on how the funds awarded had been spent. **(Action point 5)**

All the above was unanimously agreed, having been proposed by Councillor Webb and seconded by Councillor McCormick.

## Consideration of draft budget for 2024/25.

Councillors asked that £5,000 be added to the grounds maintenance budget, increasing it to £25,570. The Clerk advised that he had been informed that the DALC subscription would be £241 higher than he had predicted and would need to be added to the forecast. Thereafter, the budget was unanimously approved having been proposed by Councillor Sherwood and seconded by Councillor Webb. **(Action point 6)**

## Review of room hire, allotment and cemetery charges for 2024/25.

It was agreed to recommend to full council that room hire charges be increased by £1.50 per hour across the board from 1/4/24. **(Action point 7).** It was agreed that allotment charges would be increased by the customary £1 per plot from October 2024. A request from a plot holder to change charging system to allow holders of more than one plot to be charged for the cumulative acreage rather than for two plots was rejected by councillors. **(Action point 8)** Councillors asked for comparison figures for allotment charges to be available for the March committee meeting. **(Action point 9)** Councillors had received details of other cemetery charges in Teignbridge and agreed to make to following changes. Earthen graves £695 to £750. Cremation plots £100 to £250. Interment single depth £385 to £450. Interment double depth £495 to £550. Interment into cremation plot £242 to £300. **(Action point 10)**

## Resolution: Following the NALC announcement of the national agreement on Clerk’s pay for 2023/24 the committee agrees that the Clerk’ pay should increase to £18.58 per hour backdated to 1/4/23. The Assistant Clerk’s salary should be increased to £15.48 per hour, also backdated to 1/4/23.

The Clerk advised that the resolution was incorrect because he had used incorrect spine points in the calculation. The correct figures were £21.53 and £16.30 respectively. Councillors wre content that the resolution be submitted to full council with the correct figures in place. **(Action point 11)**

## Consideration of staff salaries for 2024/25:

See appendix 3. Councillors were content that this should be submitted to full council for approval. **(action point 12)**

## Consideration of precept for 2024/25:

After discussion councillors unanimously agreed to recommend that full council increase the precept by 5% on the council tax paid by Band D households, making a total of £185,934. Proposed by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Councillor Riley. **(Action point 13)**

## Premises issues.

Councillors had seen the two quotations for the construction of an extension to the garage at the rear of the Town Hall and the repointing work obtained by APSE. They noted that a third expected quotation, from Devon Minor Works, had not materialised. It was agreed that the Clerk should seek acceptance for the Barley Manor quotation at January full council. **(Action point 14)** Councillors noted that the quotation process for the installation of PV panels was progressing. Councillor McCormick noted that it was not essential to complete this in 2024/25 if cashflow was an issue as the planning consent remailed current for three years. Councillors noted the fire risk assessment report and identified a missing cover on the emergency light in the Woodway Room as an issue that needed addressing. **(Action point 15)** Councillors were anxious for the rest centre to be refurbished in the near future. **(Action point 16)**

## Staff issues.

Nothing to report.

## Review of effectiveness of internal audit.

Councillor Lillington expreesed satisfaction with the audit service provided by IAC. She considered it to be thorough and identified issues that required addressing. Councilors concurred with this assessment. The review was unanimously supported having been proposed by Councillor Bowling and seconded by Councillor McCormick.

## Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2024/25.

It was unanimously agreed that full council should be asked to ratify the appointment of IAC as the internal auditor for 2024/25. Proposed by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Councillor Lillington. **(Action point 17)**

## Correspondence:

None

## Date and time of next meeting:

Tuesday 12 March 2024 @ 7pm

The meeting closed at 8.55pm

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | Action Point | By whom/when | Cleared |
| 1 | Send details of proposed action on the inerim audit report to the internal auditor. | The Clerk |  |
| 2 | Ask full council to ratify the proposed 137 grant awards at January full council | The Clerk |  |
| 3 | Invite Vince Wilson to March meeting for discussion on what the council can do to facilitate CAB services within the town. | The Clerk |  |
| 4 | Review grant application process at March committee meeting | The Clerk |  |
| 5 | Ensure grant recipients are aware that they need to provide a report saying how they have spent the award. | The Clerk |  |
| 6 | Add £5,000 to grounds maintenance budget and £241 to memberships budget. | The Clerk |  |
| 7 | Recommend to full council that room hire charges be increased by £1.50 per hour from 1/4/24 | The Clerk |  |
| 8 | Advise plot holder seeking a change to the charging process that councillors did not support the proposal. | The Clerk |  |
| 9 | Provide councillors with details of comparative allotment charges at the March committee meeting. | The Clerk |  |
| 10 | Recommend to full council that cemetery charges be increased by the amounts specified at item 12. | The Clerk |  |
| 11 | Submit resolution to full council regarding the Cler’s and Assistant Clerk’s salaries from 1/4/23 | The Clerk |  |
| 12 | Submit staff salaries to January full council for approval | The Clerk |  |
| 13 | Recommend to January full council that the precept be increased to £185,934 | The Clerk |  |
| 14 | Ask Full Council to accept the quotation for the Town Hall extension and repointing submitted by Barley Manor. | The Clerk |  |
| 15 | Replace cover of emergency light in the Woodway Room | The Clerk |  |
| 16 | Refurbishment of the rest centre to be discussed at March committee meeting. | The Clerk |  |
| 17 | Full council to be asked to ratify the appointment of IAC as Internal Auditor for 2024/25 | The Clerk |  |

Signed:

Clare Lillington: Chair: Town Hall & Finance Committee

Date: 8 January 2024

## Appendix 1 - Finance Report to Town Hall & Finance Committee: December 2023

**Balances at 11 December 2023.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Current account | £3,438.58 |  |
| Deposit Account | £222,220.75 | £140,000 was transferred to a fixed term deposit on 5/6/23. It matures on 26/2/24 with a yield of £3,334.68. |
| Building maintenance account | £39,307.86 | £6,500m was transferred from the deposit account on 7/6/23 |

Ring-fenced funds included in the deposit account above:-

£143 from DCC for P3 grant (footpaths)

£170,406.61 CIL funds; This follows the receipt of £44,887.25 in CIL funds on 29/4/23. Items funded by CIL in 2023/24 – Junction marking at Bridgelands Bridge (£550), swimming pool grant to CCP (£1,500), Grant for repairs to Youth Centre (£3,214), reglazing of Town Mills bus shelter (£1,600), construction of wall at cemetery (£12,707)

£328 for the Underwood Meadow memorial: Reduced by £672 since last report as the memorial has been paid for. The remainder should be used for a project.

Total: £170,877.61

## Appendix 2

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 31/3/23 | Projected at 31/3/24 | Projects for funding |
| General | £134,917 | Circa £110,000 | Street lamp at The Gardens (£3,000), Station Hill VAS (£4,500), Solar panels (£17,000) |
| CIL | £116,000 | £170,407 | Millstream Meadow play park (£140,000). Culver Green play park (£40,000). Bus Shelter (£10,000) |
| Building maintenance | £32,574 | £39,307 | Town Hall extension and repointing £37,000 |

A few thoughts to consider:-

1. On the face of it our CIL funds will be exhausted next year. However, there will be further CIL payments in April and October 2024. Unfortunately, I have no way of knowing how much they will be.
2. We always have the option of delaying the Culver Green play park project.
3. We will need to rebuild the building maintenance fund again.
4. Our general reserves are still quite healthy but I think the above shows that we have limited scope to function on an unbalanced budget where our expenditure significantly outweighs our income.

## Appendix 3

**Staff salaries schedule 2024/25**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Hourly rate from 1/9/22 | Hourly rate from 1/4/23 | Hourly rate from 1/4/24 |
| Diane Hopkins | £10.10 | £10.90 | £12.00 |
| Geoff Curtis | £10.10 | £10.90 | £12.00 |
| Adrian Martin | £10.25 | £11.05 | £12.30 |
| Amii Shelley | £12.50 | £13.30 | £14.50 |
| John Carlton | £20.53 (SP 33) | £21.53 | £21.53 \*\* |
| Amii Shelley (When deputising) | £15.30 (SP 22) | £16.30 | £16.30 \*\* |

**Notes:-**

1. Some years ago the Council decided that that rates of play for the reception and caretaker roles would be tied to that of the Living Wage Foundation. This decision is not set in stone and can be reconsidered if councillors so desire.
2. The Living Wage Foundation announced on 15/11/23 that their rates would increase from £10.90 to £12.00 per hour.
3. The \*\* indicates that these rates of pay were backdated to 1/4/23 as part of the national pay agreement.
4. The rates of pay for Adrian and Amii have been determined by adding £1.20 per hour to what they were previously receiving.
5. The rate of pay for the Clerk (and for Amii when deputising) is determined by the National pay scales.
6. Each year the Town Hall & Finance Committee will recommend to full council what rates of pay should apply from the following April. Full Council will then need to either ratify or amend it.

John Carlton

Town Clerk

11 December 2023