

DEREHAM TOWN COUNCIL

3rd December 2013

At a meeting of the **Finance & Governance Committee** held in the Assembly Rooms on **Tuesday 3rd December 2013 at 7.30pm** upon the rising of the extraordinary meeting of the Recreation Committee .

Present: Councillors T Birt (Chair), P Duigan, L Goreham, S Green, R Hambidge, and T Monument.

Also Present: Councillors A Bowyer and L Monument , Tony Needham (Town Clerk) and County and District Councillor W Richmond

1. To consider apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declaration of Interests

Councillor L Goreham declared an interest in agenda item 3 because she was a member of the Dereham and District Allotment Association.

Councillor A Bowyer declared an interest in Agenda item 3 because she was chairman of the Dereham and District Allotment Association.

3. To consider grants

Councillors L Goreham and A Bowyer left the room while the grant for the Dereham and District Allotment and Gardeners Society was being considered.

The Committee recommended the following grants.

- I. Dereham Band £510 Sponsorship of three summer concerts in the Queen Mothers Garden in 2014. The Band would be asked to consider improved publicity including using Breckland Council's web-site and to consider alternative locations in future years.
- II. Dereham and District Allotment and Gardeners Society £150 towards cost of putting on summer show. The Council has funded this for a number of years and felt that it should be becoming financially sustainable. When considering grants for this event in the future, the committee would like to see how the grant is being used to encourage wider community involved.
- III. Royal Air Force Association (Dereham Branch) £157 fee for Dereham Band to lead the Battle of Britain Parade (retrospective).

4. To consider Grants falling outside the Council's Grant Scheme

Councillors reviewed the information submitted by the Citizens Advice Bureau with their application which detailed the number of residents benefiting from the service.

Proposed by Councillor T Birt, seconded by Councillor P Duigan it was agreed to recommend that a grant of £4,000 be awarded to running costs of CAB for 2013/14.

The committee recommended that in future years, before approval of the annual grant to CAB, that a presentation be made to Full Council by a representative of CAB detailing the benefit which the Council's grant brings to the people of Dereham. It was recommended that for 2014/15 grant, a representative be invited to the July Full Council meeting.

5. Exclusion of Press and Public

No proposal was made at this stage of the meeting to exclude the Press and Public

6. To consider revenue budget 2014 - 2015.

Councillors noted amendments to Community Car scheme and legal fees budget for 2013-14.

The Committee recommended the following changes to the presented budget.

- I. To separate out the Civic budget into two budgets; a Mayor's events budget of £1,550 to cover Civic Sunday and any charitable activities the Mayor wishes to pursue, and a Civic Events budget to cover those activities which take place every year i.e. Armed Forces Day, Bowls Match, Battle of Britain and Remembrance Sunday this would total £2,125.
- II. That £10,000 toilet cleaning budget be moved to salaries and to hold this until the Council has decided on future staffing needs.
- III. That the grant for Dereham Antiquarians already agreed be presented under Bishop Bonners Cottages cost centre

The following additional comment was made:

Check the figures for Allotment Repairs and Maintenance budget – there appears to be a discrepancy.

7. To consider the 5 year projected budget.

Councillors noted the budget and requested that:

- The headings 'Delegated Services' and 'Play Areas and Open Spaces' be broken down.
- That in the end of year accounts a breakdown of the state of play with regards to the loan repayment be presented.

Proposed by Councillor T Birt, seconded by Councillor R Hambidge it was agreed to increase the Council's target reserves from £280,000 to £300,000. The reason for the recommendation is that as the Council takes on more responsibilities, the level of reserves need to reflect the increased risks.

The Committee agreed to consider agenda item 9 before agenda item 8.

9 To consider any changes to Council Tax for 2014-15

The committee recognised that there was inflationary pressures on all the budgets. The merits of different measures of inflation along with the Government's 'excessive' level of increase were discussed.

The committee recommended that the precept for 2014-15 be set at £656,387 this would be a 2% increase on the Town Council's proportion of the average Council Tax bill, making the Town Council's proportion of a Band D property £130.34 an increase of £2.56 per year.

8. To consider increasing fees and charges

The committee felt that this should be considered by the individual committees with the following recommendation:

The Committee recommended that in considering inflationary increase in charges for 2014-15 that the respective committees look at inflationary increase in the region of 3%.

The reason for the recommendation is that it is better to have a gradual increase with inflation rather than occasional large increase.

10. To consider new financial risks facing the Council

The Committee noted the financial risks particularly the risk of a Referendum for excessive Council Tax increase being introduced to Town and Parish Council, the loss of a tenant in any of the council's properties, the maintenance of the Market Place, uncertain labour costs in taking over the play areas and the possibility of charges being introduced for emptying dog bins.

While the Council felt that these were all risks that need to be kept reviewed, it didn't feel that they were so likely that the precept needed to be increased to mitigate at this point in time.

5 Exclusion of Press and Public

Proposed by Councillor T Birt seconded by Councillor R Hambidge it was agreed to exclude the Press and Public on the grounds that the Business to be transacted is confidential and publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest, but to invite County and District Councillor W Richmond to remain with the committee as the matter being discussed had some County Council matters which Councillor W Richmond may be able to assist with.

11. To consider sale of Tanners Plot Fleece Meadow.

The Clerk reported that while he was hoping to have had the information for Councillors it hadn't been possible for him to get the information ready for this committee.

Chairman