

OPEN SESSION: There was one member of the public present.

## **MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2004 at 7.00pm

PRESENT: Cllr N J Chard (Chairman)  
Cllr P Chambers  
Cllr N G R Clarke  
Cllr L C Ford  
Cllr N W Light  
Cllr W S Rippon-Swaine  
Cllr Mrs V A Sullivan  
Cllr B H Terry  
Cllr M H Thierry

IN ATTENDANCE: Terry Simpson, Town Clerk  
Jo Stannard, Deputy Town Clerk  
Martin Townsend, Finance Officer

### **F/3710 APOLOGIES**

All members were present.

### **F/3711 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Thierry and Cllr Ford declared a non-prejudicial personal interest in agenda item 11 regarding arrangements for future office accommodation.

### **F/3712 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2004, having been previously circulated, be agreed and signed as a correct record.

### **F/3713 MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS (Annex 'A')**

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the list of cheque payments on the No. 1 account be approved.
- 2) That the list of cheque payments on the Imprest account be approved.
- 3) That the list of Petty Cash payments be approved.
- 4) That the statement be received and noted.

### **F/3714 ANNUAL RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2004**

The Town Clerk was delighted to report that District Audit had signed off the Council's Annual Return for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004 with no comment.

**RESOLVED:** That this information be noted.

*For the benefit of Cllr Thierry and Cllr Ford, who had to leave the meeting early, it was agreed to bring forward agenda items 10 and 11.*

**F/3715  
EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED:** That under section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information (*Annex 'B'*).

**F/3716  
OFFICE ACCOMMODATION**

The Town Clerk reported that the District Council was prepared to negotiate the sale of the freehold of the Public Offices in Christchurch Road.

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Clerk, in liaison with appropriate members, be authorised to continue investigations with New Forest District Council regarding the possible acquisition of the Public Offices.

**F/3716  
DR LITTLE GARDENS**

The Town Clerk reported on the terms and price of purchase for that part of Dr Little Gardens not owned by the Town Council. It was noted that the purchase would be funded from developers' contributions.

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Clerk be authorised to proceed with the purchase of part of Dr Little Gardens.

*Cllr Thierry and Cllr Mrs Ford left the meeting at 7.35pm.*

**F/3717  
RE-ADMISSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED:** That the public and press be re-admitted to the meeting.

**F/3718  
COMMITTEE BUDGET 2005/06**

**(1)** Members considered the Expenditure Report in respect of the Budget Provision for 2004/005.

The Town Clerk reported that he had been approached by Eastfield Electrics who had been asked by several traders to put up some Christmas lights where the new contractor had failed to deliver.

With regards to Committee Room Furniture, it was noted that Pine & Country Furniture could provide a 5ft extension table, stained to match the existing table for approximately £475.

**(2)** The Revised Budget 2004/005 and Original Budget 2005/006 for the Policy & Finance Committee was carefully considered.

**(3)** Members considered the Committee's further Proposals for 2005/006.

The Town Clerk reported that all the bids for new expenditure could be contained within the current precept + 3% inflation. It was therefore agreed that there was no need to prioritise the items as they could all be met within budget. Members considered all the proposals and the following comments were made:

Members considered whether a contribution should be made towards the continuation of the Youth Club and it was agreed to allocate £1,000, subject to the conditions set out in Annex 'E'

It was noted that the Deputy Town Clerk was currently negotiating with different suppliers with regards to future maintenance of the Council's IT network. Indication was that a budget of £2,000 would be required. Cllr Chambers was concerned about the security of backup over the Internet and suggested that CDs could be held off-site or the company that provides the annual maintenance contract could offer this service. It was therefore agreed to delete the £200 allocated for backup.

Cllr Chard suggested that, in view of the problems experienced this year, the budget for Christmas lights for 2005/06 be increased to £5,000. After careful consideration, this was agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Expenditure Report in respect of the Budget Provision for 2004/2005 (Annex 'C') be noted.
- 2) That Eastfield Electrics be not instructed to erect any Christmas lights in the town this year.
- 3) That a 5ft table be purchased from Pine & Country Furniture.
- 4) That the Revised Budget 2004/005 and Original Base Budget 2005/006 for the Policy & Finance Committee (Annex 'D') be approved.
- 5) That the Committee's further Budget Proposals for 2005/006 as detailed in Annex 'E', be approved.

**F/3719**

**COUNCIL BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2005/06**

Members considered the Town Clerk's report (Annex 'F') and noted that, if all recommendations were approved, the Council Tax for a Band D property in 2005/06 would increase by £1.39 per annum, i.e. 3%.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) That the base budget for Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee, as set out in Appendix 'A' be approved.
- 2) That the proposals marked Priority A, B and C in Appendix 'B' be accepted and included in the Council's overall budget for 2005/06.
- 3) That the base budget for Planning, Town & Environment Committee, as set out in Appendix 'C' be approved.
- 4) That proposals marked A and B in Appendix 'D' be accepted and included in the Council's overall budget for 2005/06.
- 5) That the base budget for Policy & Finance Committee, as set out in Annex 'D' be approved.
- 6) That all proposals in Annex 'E' be accepted and included in the Council's overall budget for 2005/06.
- 7) That the Council approve a precept of £254,650 for 2005/06.

Cllr Clarke proposed a vote of thanks to the Town Clerk and the Finance Officer for their hard work in the preparation of the budget papers. This was fully supported by the Committee.

Members enquired whether it would be possible to provide more data on financial trends and profile expenditure throughout the year. It was explained that, as part of the development of the Council's financial affairs, officers would be reporting to Members in the New Year on additional information that could be made available.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.45pm.