



Carterton Town Council

An EXTRAORDINARY MEETING of the TOWN COUNCIL was held on 4th January 2024 at 6.30pm in Carterton Town Hall and was attended by the following:

Chair: Cllr K Godwin

Vice-Chair: Cllr L Wood

Members: Cllr C Croft, Cllr N King, Cllr N Leverton, Cllr M McBride, Cllr M Mead, Cllr D Melvin, Cllr K Wood, Cllr J Guest, Cllr M Tarpey, Cllr Baylis, Cllr P Godfrey

In Attendance: 1 member of the public

Locum Clerk: Mrs S Haywood

ITEM	MINUTE	VOTE / ACTION
2024/C/001	APOLOGIES	
	Cllr Crapper, Cllr Leeming, Cllr Brooks – all personal. IT WAS RESOLVED that the apologies be accepted.	Proposed: KG Agreed unanimously
2024/C/002	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST and DISPENSATIONS	
	Cllr K Wood – Allotments as an allotment holder. Cllr Melvin – Community Centre as Director and Trustee. Connector Bus as a volunteer and member of Oxford Community Transport. Cllr Godfrey Godwin – Allandale Centre as outside representative.	
2024/C/003	OPEN MEETING	
	The Chair apologised that Open Meeting had not been included on the agenda and proposed that it was added here. No member of the public wished to speak.	Agreed unanimously

KG

KG

2024/C/004	2024-25 BUDGET/PRECEPT	
	<p>The Clerk had circulated a reviewed 2023/24 budget, draft 2024/25 budget, and a proposed 2024/25 precept figure.</p> <p>The Chair stated that after years of turmoil in this Town Council it is time to take a firm hand in all areas of operations. Council need to ensure that the residents of Carterton are served as they should be. This will require a good and steady financial foundation with clear budgeting for the future. Although Council have met a number of times to discuss the setting of the precept, it is still something of a mystery to some.</p> <p>The Chair proposed that Council defer the actual decision as to the setting of the precept until the next TC meeting on 16 January. At this meeting Council should review the items in the budget, answer the questions the Clerk has been asking, identify areas where savings can be made, and identify areas which can be funded by other means going forward as this is too big a decision to make in one session.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed that WODC have given an extension for submitting the precept figure from 05.01.24 to 31.01.24.</p> <p>There were mixed views on delaying the resolution and a discussion took place. A vote was taken on the motion.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED that the final resolution concerning the budgets and precept figure be deferred to the 16th January Council meeting. The purpose of this evenings meeting to be to go through the budgets line by line and try to come to a consensus on the 2024/25 precept requirement.</p> <p>The proposed budget was looked at section by section and a discussion took place. The Clerk asked that revenue generation be looked at as part of the discussions, not just cutting expenditure.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED that the meeting be closed to the press and public due to confidential staffing costs being discussed. <i>Cllr Leverton left the meeting so was not present for the vote but returned to the meeting at the start of the following discussion.</i></p> <p><u>Salaries</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To check whether any Officers are due a scale increase. Contracts to be checked. Staffing review. A £15k budget was proposed. IT WAS RESOLVED not to include a budget for the staffing review recommendations and to utilise existing Officers. Budget to include existing salaries for all Officers, however, a small contingency has been allowed for in case Officers are due a scale rise. 	<p>Proposed:KG Seconded:PG 8 for 5 against Clerk</p> <p>Proposed:MMcB Seconded:PG 12 for</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Proposed:MMcB Seconded:LW 4 for 9 against</p>

	<p><u>Mace Bearer</u></p> <p>A discussion took place as to whether a veteran could hold the position. The Chair confirmed that Council had discussed this previously and it was not agreed.</p> <p><u>Recharges</u></p> <p>The Clerk recommended that every expenditure where possible is recharged to the relevant budget cost centre to show a true cost of each asset, for example, salaries and insurance to be recharged for each relevant asset.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED that recharges be left up to the Clerk.</p> <p><u>Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)</u></p> <p>Worknest have quoted £1,260 p.a. for an EAP.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED that Council do not have an EAP.</p> <p><u>Accountancy</u></p> <p>Council currently contract out the accountancy. The staffing review recommends employing a RFO and recommends bringing the accounts back in-house. The Clerk confirmed that having the accounts outsourced has caused problems by way of not having access to the accounts information when needed and it being difficult to have a handle on the accounts just from monthly reports. A budget has been left in for accountancy as if Council decide to bring the accounts back in-house a budget will be needed for accounting software and support.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED that DCK Accounting be asked to clarify why Council are being charged £700 for Rialtas support as being a contractor we would expect them to pay for their own support. The Clerk to check the contract and ask for a refund if paid/possible.</p> <p><u>Allotments</u></p> <p>A discussion took place as to whether Council should be paying for the hire of toilets or if the Allotment Association should be paying for these out of the plot income. It was also discussed as to whether toilets are needed and other more eco and cheaper options such as woowoo toilets. To be decided upon once an asset review has been carried out. Cllr Wood advised that the Allotment Association would not be able to afford hire of toilets. A copy of the Allotment Association accounts to be obtained as part of the asset review. Grant funding to be looked at also.</p> <p>Cllr Godfrey advised that one allotment site had public toilets adjacent to it and there may be a possibility of using the Football Club toilets at the other site.</p>	<p>Agreed unanimously Clerk</p> <p>Agreed unanimously</p> <p>Agreed unanimously Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk / PG</p>
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WJH

	<p>The Allotment Association currently collect all allotment plot rents and they pay Council a peppercorn rent of £1 p.a. per allotment site. This money has not been received for several years and is being chased. It was generally felt that if the Allotment Association have the plot income then they should be paying for the maintenance and other costs out of that income.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED that the Council continue to pay for the allotments toilet hire for the timebeing until an asset review is carried out whereby other options and grant funding can be considered. The review to consider a rent increase.</p> <p><u>Asset Review</u></p> <p>It was agreed that a review of all assets is needed, including rents, maintenance costs, long term leases etc.</p> <p><u>Baldwin Mews</u></p> <p>There were mixed views as to whether Council should be paying for the street lighting as it is not TC responsibility. WODC have not adopted the lights and the residents are currently responsible for the lighting. As the area is used by residents to access Council assets, such as the Squash Club and Scout Hut, some felt that Council have a duty. Cheaper options could be looked at such as eco lighting, dimming, solar lights, switching lights off at night etc. Some felt that the residents knew when they bought their homes that they are responsible for the lighting. Could funding be sought from the residents responsible?</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED that Council continue to pay for the lighting for the timebeing and the Residents Association to be spoken to in order to try and find a solution.</p> <p><u>Civic, Democratic & Governance</u></p> <p>There is a currently a budget of £3,300 for the Mayors Fund, £500 civic regalia and £1,000 civic expenses. The Mayor suggested that the three funds are combined with a budget of £2,750 in total for 2024/25.</p> <p>Council agreed previously a budget of £2,000 p.a. for the Dependent Care Allowance. This is difficult to budget for as it is a new allowance and it is unknown as to how many Members will claim, and how much (albeit limited to £500 per person p.a.).</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED to keep the Dependent Care Allowance at £2,000 p.a.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Proposed:MT Seconded:NL All in favour Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Proposed:MT Seconded:KW All in favour Clerk</p> <p>Proposed:KG Seconded:KW All in favour Clerk</p> <p>Proposed:MM Seconded:PG All in favour Clerk</p>
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	<p><u>PCSO</u></p> <p>A discussion took place last meeting concerning whether to retain the additional PCSO. It was felt that by paying for an additional PCSO Carterton may lose the services of the 'normal' PCSO. The Officers have confirmed that they rarely see the 'normal' PSCO but they feel the services of the paid for PCSO is a great asset in terms of him speaking to any residents where there is an issue, attending Council events etc. There is concern that if we no longer have CCTV and Council agree to terminate the paid for PCSO contract then crime may rise. Some felt that the PCSO offered more social advantages as opposed to policing advantages. Some gave an example of needing police services but the PCSO was not sent on any occasion.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED that the PCSO contract is not renewed for 2024.</p> <p><u>CCTV</u></p> <p>The Chair confirmed that the upload links do not always work. We currently pay for 4 cameras and pay the same amount to WODC as Witney TC who have 16 cameras. Cllr King has been liaising with WODC concerning a review and costings, distributed information, and a further report will be submitted shortly. It was noted that the military police do come out and help sometimes.</p> <p>A Member reported that police often ask for residents' footage these days from devices such as Ring doorbells as opposed to asking for CCTV footage. We need to ascertain whether we are tied into a contract with WODC.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED that the budget is kept for CCTV but we do not pay anything further to WODC until we receive their review as we cannot pay such monies for a system this is not working.</p> <p><u>Events</u></p> <p>The Clerk advised that rather than having one figure for the events budget that budgets are detailed and broken down for each event so it is clear the cost of each event.</p> <p><u>Play Area Trampoline</u></p> <p>Further to the motion on the last agenda concerning the repair of a trampoline, the Clerk confirmed that quotes are being obtained for a new trampoline for comparison and will be presented to the next meeting for Council decision.</p> <p><u>Open Spaces / Bedding Plants</u></p> <p>It was felt that 75 hanging baskets is excessive. The location of the baskets has been given in the last Council meeting minutes.</p>	<p>Proposed:MT Seconded:NK 8 for 5 against Clerk</p> <p>NK</p> <p>Clerk / NK</p> <p>Proposed:MM Seconded:KG All in favour Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
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KJ

	<p>As Council are not responsible for Willow Meadows and only pay for one or two cuts of the meadow annually it was felt that a budget is only needed for the cuts.</p> <p>The tree survey is being carried out next week. This is difficult to budget for as there could be no works needed or there could be £10,000's work needed. Until we have the report there is no way to predict what money is needed. The Clerk advised that the tree survey is overdue and some trees have not been inspected, for example, at the allotments and cemetery, and with the recent high winds, it is likely a lot of work will be needed to ensure all trees are safe. Records indicate we have circa 300 trees but upon further investigation it appears we have more like circa 800 trees.</p> <p><u>S106</u></p> <p>The Clerk suggested that a separate meeting is held to consider what s106 monies are available and what projects they can be spent on.</p> <p>The Clerk has received confirmation from WODC that the s106 money we have received can be used for replacement play area and maintenance. The exact wording and details has been given next to each s106 budget heading.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED that the play area maintenance budget for 2024/5 be £17k.</p> <p>Cllr McBride confirmed that Council do not need to pay for the first two years of grass mowing at St John's Garden so the budget for next year can remain at £0 as that will be the second year. Council will need to budget from 2025/2026.</p> <p>Summer bedding. IT WAS RESOLVED that the summer bedding 2024/25 budget be cut by 50% to £9k. The bedding requirements need to be looked at once the staffing review has been decided upon so we have details regarding the maintenance staffing for the future, and costings are obtained for a maintenance person or contractor.</p> <p><u>Grass Cutting</u></p> <p>The Clerk advised that it is best to retain a contractor for grass mowing due to equipment costs and failures, however, the contract should go out to tender every 2 or 3 years to ensure Council are receiving best value. The Clerk advised this needs to be done this year.</p>	<p>Proposed:KG Agreed unanimously Clerk</p> <p>Proposed:MMcB Seconded:NK All in favour Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Agreed unanimously</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
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KJM

	<p>It was suggested that grass cutting is reduced but Council did No May Mow in the past and it resulted in many complaints from residents. Cllr Leverton advised that OCC have reduced cutting this year and initially this caused problems and complaints as road junctions did not have clear visibility. Grass cutting is very weather dependent.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED that the grass cutting budget remain at £19,179 (note: a small inflationary increase has been budgeted for in 2024/25).</p> <p><u>Allotment Trees</u></p> <p>Cllr K Wood confirmed that a lot of trees at the allotments need work. They are very exposed now that neighbouring trees have been removed. It was suggested that grant funding could be obtained, or s106 be used.</p> <p><u>AARG</u></p> <p>The solicitor has confirmed that only ancillary buildings are permitted. For this reason, the Chair suggested that the pavilion be a storage unit and all utilities could be cut off and the pavilion closed to the public. Once the solicitor has responded to the other two queries the AARG can be looked at further.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED to mothball the AARG pavilion and cut all services to the bare minimum, including cutting off the utilities. The Football Club to be informed.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3d and extend the meeting by 30 minutes. <i>Cllr Leverton left the meeting and rejoined the meeting at the start of the following diiscussion.</i></p> <p><u>Squash Club</u></p> <p>As discussion took place in regards to the squash club not being very public to the residents and it operating as a Members club would do. It was acknowledged that in order to address this the Club have started to open to residents Friday evenings but it is not well advertised, including on their website. The Club were asked for their business model/plan, with projected income, but this has not been received. It is believed the Club has between 100 and 200 members who each pay £50 membership.</p> <p>Due to the maintenance costs it was suggested that a rent review is required. The Club received a £20k Covid government grant. It was suggested the Club be asked to contribute towards the maintenance costs further. To be part of the asset review. The</p>	<p>Proposed:MMcB Seconded:KG All in favour Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Proposed:MM Seconded:MT All in favour Clerk</p> <p>Proposed:KW Seconded:KG 11 for 1 abstention</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
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	<p>lease is due May 2024 so a decision needs to be made before then. It was felt that £42k expenditure is high when it only benefits a small number of residents.</p> <p><u>Scout Hut</u></p> <p>The Chair confirmed that the cadets mainly use the hut for storing cadet items that are used across the district. The military do carry out some maintenance on the building. It is also used for polling day.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED that the quinquennial budget for the Squash Club and Scout Hut remain in the budgets for the timebeing. Only essential expenditure to be approved. The rent to be increased to £6,240 p.a. from May 2024 when the contract is due for renewal.</p> <p>The quinquennial report to be checked to find out which works are essential.</p> <p><i>Cllr Baylis left the meeting.</i></p> <p><u>Streatfield House</u></p> <p>The rent budget to read £19,900 p.a.</p> <p><u>Town Hall</u></p> <p>A discussion took place as to whether to continue to offer free room hire to community groups.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED that community groups can continue to hire the Town Hall meeting rooms at no cost.</p> <p>Clarification has been sought on the bin emptying costs as the Clerk advised that £43k p.a. was very expensive. Liaison has taken place with a new Officer at WODC who has confirmed that the records are a bit of a mess and they are looking into this. We were advised that the costs should be circa £21k p.a. but another email has been received to say it is circa £32k. Confirmation is needed and liaison will continue with WODC. Options could be looked at such as looking into whether we can use another contractor, reducing the number of bins etc.</p> <p>It was confirmed that the precept cost per household would reduce if new homes are built as it is split between the number of households each year when WODC set the tax base (which is usually done each December).</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED that Standing Order 3d be suspended and the meeting be extended to 9.15pm.</p>	<p>Proposed:MT Seconded:LW All in favour Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Proposed:MT Seconded:MM All in favour</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Proposed:KG Seconded:LW All in favour</p>
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15/24

	<p><u>S106 / Projects</u></p> <p>Each s106 was listed and details given against each as to the amount, availability, and what it can be spent on. Proposed project expenditure has been listed, one section being priority expenditure as agreed by Council at the strategy meeting, and the other section being non-priority expenditure.</p> <p>A discussion took place as to whether the removal of the paths at the Empire Drive play park and replaced with turf be taken from the play park maintenance budget or the s106 budget from monies we have already received.</p> <p><i>Cllr Leverton left the meeting.</i></p> <p>It was proposed that the two paths removal costs be taken from the s106. Cllr King strongly objected to the proposal so the vote was not counted and the Chair closed the meeting. This needs to be decided upon at the next meeting.</p>	<p>Proposed:KG Seconded:KW</p> <p>Clerk</p>
2024/C/005	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	
	16 th January 2024 at 7pm at the Town Hall.	

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.

Signed:  Chair

Date: 16/01/2024