

SPECIAL FINANCE COMMITTEE
11 February 2014

Present: Councillors Westmorland (Chairman), Campbell, Draper, McIntyre & Upson.

Apologies: Councillors Draper, Leach, Pickin & Swift.

No members of the public were in attendance.
1 member of the press was in attendance

Please Note: This meeting was open to all Town Councillors (Standing Order 19b).

299 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors should disclose pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest/s in any item/s on this agenda.

Chairman to read out the following statement. Members are referred to, and shall observe, the provisions of the Hemsworth Town Council's Code of Conduct. If a Councillor has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest he/she must, unless a dispensation has been granted, withdraw from the meeting room and take no part in the discussion or vote. If any interest (Pecuniary or Non-Pecuniary) has not been entered in the Town Council's register then you must disclose it at the meeting and inform the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the date of initial disclosure. Failure to abide by the provisions of the Code in regard to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests now amounts to a criminal offence.

The Clerk informed members that all Councillors present had been granted a dispensation so as to participate in discussion of the precept/budgets and to participate in any vote on these matters.

300 BUDGETS 2014/2015

Members discussed the Town Clerk's report which had been circulated with the agenda (pages 244 – 255 of these minutes).

The Clerk gave an update re; announcement by the Government on 5 February 2014 which stated;

The Government has announced that it will not extend to parish and town councils for the 2014/2015 financial year the requirement that referendums be held to approve precept rises above 2% (as currently is applied to principal authorities).

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300 BUDGETS 2014/2015 - continued

In a written ministerial statement by Local Government Minister Brandon Lewis MP on the final local government finance settlement 2014/2015 he said:

"We have not determined principles for local precepting authorities in 2014 to 2015, but we are putting on notice that we are prepared if necessary to apply the referendum thresholds to larger town and parish councils from 2015 to 2016 onwards to provide protection for local taxpayers and extend the principle of direct democracy."

The statement also reiterates the Minister's expectation council tax support funding is passed on to parish councils:

"We have also set out previously that there is some £3.3 billion in the settlement this year for Council Tax support schemes. There is an element within this national pot that is there specifically to reflect reductions in the parish tax base. We have not separately identified the money because it is not ring-fenced and as caseloads change and schemes evolve, the amount that different parishes need will change. It would be wrong to try to manage that centrally. But we have been clear that we expect billing authorities to carry on passing on support to town councils and parishes to help mitigate any reduction in their taxbase due to the local Council Tax support scheme."

Councillor McIntyre moved that the recommendation in the report to approve the budgets, proposals & capital expenditure and to levy a precept on the District Council of £641,300 be accepted. This was seconded by Councillor Upson.

Councillor Kenyon stated that he felt that some of the budgets could be reduced i.e. Superannuation, National Insurance and bonfire. The Clerk informed Councillor Kenyon of matters affecting the new pension laws and Councillor Upson gave his views on the need to keep the bonfire budget as stated.

Councillor Kenyon went on to highlight matters relating to taking on Cemetery Road playing field from WMDC on a lease basis and that Wakefield had an obligation to provide these services so why should Hemsworth take this additional financial burden on. Councillors McIntyre & Upson put forward reasons to justify taking on these services.

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300 BUDGETS 2014/2015 - continued

Councillor Kenyon then raised issues relating to Fitzwilliam Centre and that he had personally spoken to the Charity Commission on this matter and that they had said there were indications that the Town Council when taking on this service would not run the centre legally, as had been the case with the District Council.

The Clerk informed Councillor Kenyon that the Town Councils legal advisors are dealing with the agreement and that she is obtaining advice on any necessary procedures to ensure the Centre is run correctly.

Councillor Kenyon stated that the building would never be owned in full by the Town Council as CISWO had a 1/3rd interest in the property. The Clerk said that this was not her understanding however she would look further into this matter. The Clerk did state that Councillor Kenyon had not been given authority to deal with this matter directly with the Charity Commission.

Councillor Kenyon then requested that the grants budget be decreased to save money as the same people seem to be applying for grants each year, for example Hemsworth United.

Councillor Upson explained that it was important to help all local groups and that the budget should remain as reported.

The Clerk asked members how they wished to progress with the application for a grant from H&DP.

It was agreed that the group be asked to attend a meeting with the Town Council to undertake a presentation on what work they undertake within the Community so as a decision can be made as to if a grant can be awarded.

RESOLVED: That the recommendation in the report to agree the budgets, proposals & capital expenditure and to levy a precept on the District Council of £641,300 be forwarded to the Town Council meeting for approval.

Meeting closed @ 6.50 p.m.

Tina Pattison
Town Clerk
11 February 2014

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