



Laverstock & Ford Parish Council

Incorporating Hampton Park & Old Sarum

Extraordinary Meeting held in the Parish Office at the River Bourne Community Farm at 7.00pm on Monday 9 January 2017

MINUTES

Councillors present: Birkett, Burnell, Burton (Chairman), Bussereau, Champion, Dean, Hayes, Law, Martin.

In attendance: Prince (Clerk).

The meeting started at 7pm.

17.001 APOLOGIES Cllr Davidson, Cllr Davis, Cllr Waller.

17.002 DECLARATION OF INTEREST Cllr Martin declared a pecuniary interest in her residence at 35 St James Close, Bishopdown because it will move into the Parish in April 2017.

17.003 BUDGET & SETTING OF PRECEPT FOR 2017/2018.

Budget for Expenditure and Income

The Clerk had previously circulated by email a forecast budget of expenditure and income for the financial year 2017/2018 and copies were available during the meeting. He explained the principles on which the budget had been drafted and gave an account of how each figure had been calculated. There was a discussion on the cost of insurance. It was agreed that it was unnecessary to include all-risks insurance for play equipment but the clerk was requested to investigate an increased level of fidelity insurance in view of the total funds now held by the Council. **Action Clerk**

The Newsletter was discussed and it was agreed that it would be cost neutral for 2017/2018. A large increase in expenditure on grass cutting and tree work, commensurate with the acquisition of new public open space, was agreed. The Clerk said that expenditure on the Milford Mill Road footpath, CATG Highways work and SIDs, which were all previously allocated to the General Reserve, were now included in the budget.

The Clerk said that the line for Asset Replacement, which was in effect a contribution to Earmarked Reserves, had been deliberately left blank. A separate line in the various options for precept reflected the level of funds that might be allocated for Asset Replacement. A discussion followed on the likely timescale for a need to replace the Whitebridge boardwalk. There were estimates of between one and five years.

The Chairman asked if provision should be made for possible expenditure on a Neighbourhood Plan. It was felt that there would be sufficient funds in the General Reserve to cope with this contingency should it arise.

During the discussion of income the Clerk said that he had included a contribution from restricted reserves equal to 1/20th of all S106 maintenance funds. This had not been done in previous years.

Level of Reserves for Asset Replacement

The Clerk had previously circulated a discussion paper on Financial Reserves, which proposed that £21,350 per annum should be placed annually into Earmarked Reserves to provide for the eventual replacement of the Council's assets. He explained that while some assets were many years from requiring replacement, there were others such the boardwalk, several seats and parts of the Whitebridge Play Area that would need replacement fairly soon. He said that it was regrettable that no provision had been made in previous years for the replacement of assets and that with the rapid expansion of the Council's play and recreational facilities, it is important that this is not allowed to continue.

Precept

Discussion followed on the use of grant funding to reduce the level of reserves for asset replacement. Cllr Birkett suggested that this might reduce the annual requirement by up to 50%. Cllr Burnell agreed that it was important to build up reserves and that a significant increase in precept was required but he thought that £21.35k was too high as it would entail a 65% increase in Band D taxation. It might only be £9 per household per annum but to some households that was a lot of money.

Cllr Birkett said that it was important to explain to taxpayers that the Council is being asked to take on an enormous increase in assets and these must be protected in future years. The Chairman agreed that the increase was large but it can be defended in relation to the total precept charged by other Councils. Cllr Law advised that the large percentage increase would be shown clearly on resident's Council Tax bills. Cllr Hayes said that he would prefer a more modest increase with a similar increase in the following year. It was agreed that any large increase should be explained fully in the Parish Newsletter.

Cllr Birkett asked if the General Reserve of approximately £40k, which was approximately 50% of annual expenditure, could be reduced to support the Earmarked Reserve. The Clerk advised that he would not support this because the General Reserve had to be available for some large fluctuations in cash flow to support forthcoming major projects, and the Council is increasingly exposed to emergency cash requirements as the value of its assets and liabilities increase.

A proposal was made and seconded to approve a precept requirement of £70,920, which would produce a surplus for Earmarked Reserves of £21,350 and would result in a Band D charge of £21.29 per year.

Resolved: To approve a precept requirement of £70,920. Six votes FOR, three AGAINST.

17.004 MEETING WITH SALISBURY CITY COUNCILLORS

Cllr Bussereau outlined the proposals for the meeting on 17 January. There will be 9 attendees from the Parish Council, 10 from the City Council and 2 from Wiltshire Council Spatial Planning. He also spoke about the format of the meeting. It was agreed to restrict refreshments to tea, coffee and biscuits.

The meeting concluded at 8.35pm.