

R&R/4/2011-2012

ROYAL WOOTTON BASSETT TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Revenue & Resources Committee held on Thursday 24th November 2011 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Station Road, Royal Wootton Bassett.

PRESENT: Councillors: Steve Bucknell, Susan Doyle, Owen Gibbs, Mike Leighfield, Peter Roberts, Steve Walls

Also in Attendance: Councillors: Sue Hughes, Jenny Stratton

Officers in Attendance: Johnathan Bourne, Town Clerk, Michelle Temple, Administrative Team Leader, Emily Maiden, Administrative Assistant.

26. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Paul Heaphy

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive Declarations of Interest in accordance with the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007.

RESOLVED to note that no Declarations of Interest were made.

28. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman noted that the date for the Christmas party is Friday 9th December 2011.

29. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED to confirm and sign Minutes of a meeting of the Revenue and Resources Committee held on Thursday 22nd September 2011 (R&R/3/2011-2012). Copy previously circulated.

30. ANNUAL ESTIMATES OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

The Committee was asked to consider making recommendations to the Council for its budgetary provision in the 2012/2013 financial year.

A copy of the draft estimates was attached.

Members are reminded that the draft estimates represent ongoing commitments and service provision at current levels. Changes have only been incorporated where there is a clear intent by the Council to undertake change.

Part of the role of the Revenue and Resources Committee is to review the budget recommendations of the Amenities Committee which was made at its meeting on Thursday 3rd November 2011. Once the base budget figures have been reviewed, the Committee will be asked to review the following:-

- Fixed Asset Replacement Reserve
- Reserves Analysis
- Calculation of General Reserve
- Possible Calculation of Precept (3 models attached of which one will be recommended).

The Committee was then asked to make its Precept recommendation to the Council for the financial year ended 31st March 2013.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that, since the Amenities meeting of November 3rd 2011, a correction had been made to the figures. It transpires that the ring fencing of funding as previously discussed cannot be achieved, as this would be in breach of financial regulations. The draft budget has been amended accordingly.

The Committee were presented with 3 models of possible calculation of the Precept on the final pages of the draft estimates document previously circulated. After a discussion on the document as a whole, the Committee considered each model for Precept calculation in turn. The discussion covered the following matters:-

- The layout of the document – Members felt that the format which is currently used makes it difficult to read and understand. It was suggested that a ‘variants’ column maybe helpful, showing where over spending has occurred. The page numbers on the document were also difficult to locate for some, and it was hoped that they could be presented in a clearer manner. Members felt that it should be easy for the public to see how each figure has been arrived at, and at present some felt that the format was over complicated.

The format used is dictated by the software package, which is used by a large proportion of larger local Councils. It was RESOLVED to investigate ways of simplifying the document.

- Monthly budget breakdowns– Each month, Councillors receive a full cost centre report. It was felt that this was unnecessarily detailed, and that a regular short summary would be much more cost effective.

Under the Corporate Governance rules, each Committee should be kept regularly up-to-date with the financial position of the Council. Therefore, instead of producing monthly documents, it was RESOLVED that each relevant Committee include a budget summary on their Agenda at quarterly intervals. The full figures to be kept in-house.

- Transfer of Ballards Ash – One of the key differences affecting the draft figures for the next financial year is the transfer of Ballards Ash to Wootton Bassett Rugby Club. Members wanted more information on the equipment used at Ballards Ash and by the Council’s Grounds

Team, plus information on the costs involved with general maintenance. Some of the areas that Councillors are particularly interested in are:-

- Usage – Has there been dual usage on some of the equipment at Ballards Ash?
- The Toro – Will this be disposed of or rented out to the Rugby Club?
- Maintenance – Will the Rugby Club be maintaining the same level of service on the equipment?

RESOLVED to ask the Head Groundsman, Ralph White, to produce a report covering the above points.

After discussion of the figures, the Committee turned its attention to the 3 models for possible calculation of the Precept. The third model of Precept Calculation (not based on ‘Balanced Budget’ or ‘Balanced Precept’) was recommended to the Committee. This model shows a decrease of £2.50 from the previous financial year, based upon the equivalent calculation for a Band D house. The reason this particular model was suggested was due to the likelihood that costs will reduce as a result of the deal with the Rugby Club over Ballards Ash. Services will not be affected at any level. There have been no service cuts to Town Council run operations, and thus budget shows no likelihood of this happening.

RESOLVED to recommend the precept figure of £787,090 to Full Council. This represents a decrease on last year’s Council Tax of 1.3385%, or a reduction of £2.50 on a Band D property.

31. PRESS RELEASES

The Committee was asked to consider whether it would like any Press Releases to be issued in respect of the Committee Agenda items.

RESOLVED to issue Press Releases covering the following:-

- The decrease in Council Tax for the forthcoming 2012-2013 financial year. CCTV as an example of what the tax payer of Royal Wootton Bassett pays for, in comparison to other towns across Wiltshire.

32. PRIVATE SESSION

The Council was asked that members of the public and press be requested to leave the meeting to allow discussion of the establishment, property and finance matters as it is considered the publicity would be prejudicial by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.