

**CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES of the meeting of the FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

**PRESENT** Councillor D. MacBean – Chairman (presiding)

Councillor	A.K. Bacon	Councillor	F.S. Wilson
	N.L. Brown	"	P.W. Yerrell
	M.W. Shaw		

Officers: Mr W. Richards - Town Clerk  
Mr S. Pearson – Finance and Contracts Manager

In attendance: Councillor Mrs J.E. MacBean.

24. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest that were brought to the Chairman's notice.

25. **MINUTES**

It was

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes of the meetings of the Finance Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020, as amended, and 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

26. **PROPOSED BUDGETS AND PRECEPT 2021/22**

The Clerk presented the proposed draft budget based on indicative views expressed by the newly formed Budgetary Working Party which met just before Christmas. The Clerk explained that the Working Party had accepted that this had been an exceptional year with the pandemic and therefore budgets ought to be based largely on the ones set for the start of 2020/21 and, with the general financial hardship suffered by many residents, the budget should reflect a zero-based increase on a Band D property in terms of the Precept. He also highlighted both a proposal to transfer some of the Earmarked Reserves into the General Reserve and confirmation of a Small Works budget of £116,000 along with an additional £100,000 for a Covid Recovery and Transformation Budget.

The Committee agreed with the principle of setting a zero-based budget for 2021/22 and also to the agreement of the Small Works budget and the Covid Recovery and Transformation Budget – the latter to come from the General Reserve. However, there was no consensus on whether the Earmarked Reserves policy should be dropped, especially for monies set aside for a new Cemetery and desilting of Skottowes Pond, and

it was agreed that further consideration should be given to this when the Reserves Policy goes through its annual review in March.

It was

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Committee recommends to the full Council that it requests a 2020/21 precept figure of £963,107 from Buckinghamshire Council and that a sum of around £13,500 be allocated from the General Fund or Reserves to maintain a zero increase to the 'Band D' property charge.
2. That the question of Earmarked Reserves be reconsidered during the Annual Review of Reserves in March.
3. That the Committee recommends to the full Council that the small works projects as presented be agreed and contained within the £116,800 budgetary provision and a further £100,000 to be committed for special Covid Recovery and projects from Reserves or General Fund which schemes to be considered and approved by the Community, Assets and Environment Committee and its level of adequacy to be reviewed after 6 months.

27. **INTERNAL AUDIT 2020/21 AND EXTERNAL AUDIT 2019/20**

Members considered the two audit reports produced by the Internal Auditors and officers' responses to the issues raised. The Clerk opined that, while some concerns had been mainly addressed by Officers, the effect of the pandemic had led to some delays and highlighted perceived weaknesses in financial controls and it was still the intention to have a review of the financial operation to support officers and improve efficiency.

The Chairman then sought questions and queries from Members. In response to a query in respect to insurance, the Finance and Contracts Manager assured the Committee that the Council was continuingly fully insured but a review would be forthcoming on the appropriate levels needed in the future.

The Committee also noted the External Auditors had completed their limited assurance review for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 and signed off the accounts with no adjustments required or areas of concern raised.

It was

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Committee notes the Internal Auditor's Reports and the officers' comments.

2. That the amount within the Report needed to utilise the Internal Auditor to review the independent report and to liaise with the consultant on statutory compliance, be agreed.
3. That the External Auditor's Limited Assurance Review be noted.

28. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 6.00pm.