

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of Acton Community Council held on Tuesday 7 November 2017 at Acton Community Resource Centre, Overton Way, Acton, Wrexham**

Present:

|            |                 |            |                      |
|------------|-----------------|------------|----------------------|
| Councillor | P Lloyd (Chair) | Councillor | R Hardy (Vice Chair) |
| "          | W Baldwin       | "          | D Picken *           |
| "          | M Davies        | "          | B Pritchard          |
| "          | Mrs A Evans     | "          | Kevin Roberts        |
| "          | Ms S Hope       | "          | Mrs D Wallice        |
| "          | P D Jones       |            | Ms A Waters *        |
|            | G Lowe          |            | Ms L Williams        |
|            |                 |            | 2 Vacancies          |

\* Absent

Also Present:

Mrs Carole Roberts, Clerk to the Council

## 75 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul Jones, Darren Picken and Ms Aimi Waters.

## 76 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No Declarations of Interest were made at this stage of the proceedings:

## 77 ANNUAL ESTIMATES OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR 2018/19 FINANCIAL YEAR- GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Further to the decision contained in Minutes 68 and 69.2 October 2017 the Chair reminded members that this special meeting had been convened to enable the Community Council to inform the budget setting process for 2018/19 and to consider Priorities, Spending Powers and current budget headings. A number of background papers had been circulated with the agenda to assist members in their deliberations, namely:

### Current expenditure:

1. Extract of the Estimates and Precept Setting Minutes from 16 December 2016
2. Copy of the Clerk's Report on the Annual Investment Strategy for 2017/18
3. Copy of the Draft Provisional estimates for 2017/18 submitted to 16 December 2016 Council meeting
4. Copy of the Clerk's Report on the year-end accounts to 31 March 2017 as reported to the April 2017 meeting of the Council
5. SLCC Advice Note on What Can Local Council's Do?
6. SLCC Advice note on Local Council Services and Powers
7. Welsh Government Letter dated 5 January 2017 advising of the Section 137 Expenditure Limit for 2017-18
8. Current Year Receipts and Payments by Budget Heading to 30 September 2017
9. Summary of Receipts and Payments to 30 September 2017
10. Bank – Cash and Investment Reconciliation as at 30 September 2017

### New Expenditure

11. **Extract from 2018/19 Draft Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel:** included in accordance with Minute 69.2 October 2017 so that any implications financial or otherwise together with the Council's response to this Draft report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales can be determined at this Special meeting of the Council.

12. **SLA Pilot Project for Youth Club for 8-13 and 14-18 year olds** (Minute 74iii October 2017 refers) This minute gives approval in principle to include the appropriate sums in the 2018/19 Estimates of Income and Expenditure for both the Pilot and established Youth Clubs.

## **GENERAL ADMINISTRATION**

Members proceeded to consider the present 2017/18 Budget's expenditure item by item discussing whether the present and other priorities in the coming year are the most cost effective way of spending the Precept and other monies to the best of the Council's ability; and whether within existing Powers and aspirations there is scope to use the monies differently.

During the debate Members considered the first section of the Budget as set out under General Administration. It was accepted there were certain mandatory items such as Employers costs, Insurance, Election and Audit Fees and Website costs. The following matters were highlighted:-

- Members Remuneration is a nominal budget provision to reflect the Council's current decisions in respect of the Independent Remuneration Panel's Determinations for 2017/18. There have been no payments made from this budget since it was established. There are severe financial implications if the 2018/19 Draft Report's new recommendations require that Councils **must** pay certain allowances rather than being authorised to make them in terms of no longer having any discretion, to adopt or not those recommendations and the implications in having to pay the allowances through HMRC PAYE systems for all Members of the Council.
- In respect of Website costs there is potential for the low level of the current provision to be reviewed upwards. It was noted that the Clerk is the Webmaster for the Community Council's website.
- The other remaining items were optional but the Council wished to retain the existing items of expenditure for the time being. It was noted that expenditure for exceptional or urgent expenditure is permitted from the Council's balances within the limits imposed by the Welsh Government under the provisions of Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **78 ANNUAL ESTIMATES OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR 2018/19 FINANCIAL YEAR – SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS, OTHER PROJECTS AND NEW EXPENDITURE**

### **1. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS & OTHER PROJECTS**

Members continued to consider the present year's budget expenditure item by item in respect of existing Service Level Agreements and Other Projects. In respect of the Service Level Agreements, Members endorsed the Services being provided as representing good value for money and a wish to continue with and potentially extend some of the annual Service Level Agreements. The merits of longer three year Service level Agreements were noted.

In respect of Other Projects the following matters were discussed:

- The Acton Community Resource Centre Service Level Agreement requires regular reporting on performance monitoring. The Community Council's representatives on the Management Committee expressed serious concerns about the lack of financial information being provided at the Management Committee meetings. This made it difficult for the Members to ensure the financial probity aspects of the Resource Centre are satisfactory. Clarity is needed on matters pertaining to the feasible financial standing of the Community Resource Centre and its maintenance issues to ensure that these issues do not fall to Acton Community Council in lieu of Wrexham County Borough Council.
- the costs and feasibility of extending the time span of the Annual Seasonal Park Ranger post at Acton Park should be investigated with Wrexham CBC Officers. This separately funded post is not included in the proposed reduction of Wrexham CBC Ranger Services but may be affected if severe cuts are made.
- the Community Council had agreed in December 2016 to fund for three years, the actual costs incurred by Wrexham CBC for the operation of the Little Acton Community Centre to maintain its viability whilst the voluntary Community Group taking over responsibility for the Community Centre conclude their negotiations with Wrexham CBC. This commitment has enabled the Community Centre to be excluded from the current "Difficult Decisions" consultation proposals and negotiations were ongoing with Wrexham CBC.

- Members referred to the desirability of additional litter bins being provided in the Acton Community. There is no provision made within the Community Council's budget for this as litter bins are currently provided and the responsibility for their being emptied is at Wrexham County Borough Council's cost. . It was noted that provision of any additional litter bins may incur long term funding commitments as the cost of emptying such bins may have to be borne by the Community Council.
- The Young Persons Projects budget will have to be increased in line with the decision contained in Minute 74iii October 2017 and the continuing work of the Youth Committee with the Caia Park Partnership through the existing and pilot Service Level Agreements.
- Crime Prevention projects have included a contribution to the drugs dog operation and the potential for CCTV and speed warning signs was discussed. In respect of the Speed indication signs, the protocol required there to be a proven need for such warnings.
- The Council's level of Reserves both earmarked and unmarked should be considered as part of the budget setting process. It was noted that unmarked reserves should be held as a working balance and best practice was for Community Councils to hold between three and twelve months of the Council precept as balances.

## 2. NEW EXPENDITURE

### i. 2018/19 Draft Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel:

The Council discussed its response to this Annual Draft report and considered each of the determinations contained within Section 13 of the report. The Community Council had been placed in Group B for the purposes of the draft report and its determinations. The Panel is mandating payment of a contribution to costs and expenses and reimbursement of the costs of care for all Members of the Community Council as set out in Determinations 44 and 51.

In particular Members expressed grave concerns about the inclusion of the word "must" rather than "are authorised" in Determination 44 that provides for payments towards costs and expenses. Members were most concerned about the increased financial burden that will be placed on the Community Council if these payments must be made to all members of the Council as a taxable payment and thus required by HMRC to be paid through PAYE provisions.

There are additional costs, practicalities and difficulties in respect of administering the requirements set out in the Draft Report. The Council's view is that Community Councillors consider their role to be voluntary but not without cost. The Council is minded that there should be some of recognition for their service to their local community. However any provision for Members Allowances would impact and be a new charge on the Community Council's precept with no visible benefits for members of the public from paying an increased Council Tax Charge. Introduction of any new requirements by the Panel to pay Members should be achieved through funding provided at an all Wales Government level and not at individual Community Council level.

The timetabling of the Panel's annual reporting regime and consultation is out of synchronisation with the annual budgeting and precept setting regime for Town and Community Councils. This creates difficulties as any determinations with cost implications are notified in the Panel's Annual report in February for implementation from 1 April each year which is after the Councils' precepts have been set.

***RESOLVED – that the decision set out below will apply to all Members of the Community Council from 1 April 2018 and is confirmed as being the Community Council's determination in respect of the permissive powers contained in the Independent Remuneration Panel's Draft report for 2018/19 which will become effective from 1 April 2018 (subject to consideration of comments and objections received as part of the current consultation process) and the relevant £2,400.00 additional budget provision under the heading of "Members Remuneration" should be included in the General Administration Section of the 2018/19 Budget:***

- 1) Determination 44: Expenses and Costs up to £150 per member – If the Panel Determines this is an authorisation to pay this provision, Not to adopt this provision however if the Council is required to make this payment the sum of £2,400 shall be added to the Members Remuneration budget and used for this purpose;***
- 2) Determination 45: This provision for Council in Group A does not apply to the Council***
- 3) Determination 46 Senior Role Salaries – Not to adopt this provision***

- 4) **Determination 47: Reimbursement of Travel and Subsistence when undertaking approved duties: To adopt this provision subject to payments being the actual costs of travel by public transport or the HMRC mileage allowances as below:**
- 45p per mile up to 10,000 miles in the year.
  - 25p per mile over 10,000 miles.
  - 5p per passenger per mile – passenger supplement.
  - 24p per mile for private motor cycles.
  - 20p per mile for bicycles.
- 5) **Determination 48: Reimbursement of subsistence expenses for attending approved duties outside the area of the Council – to adopt this provision and pay the maximum rates set out below on the basis of receipted claims:**
- £28 per day allowance for meals, including breakfast where not provided.
  - £200 – London overnight.
  - £95 – elsewhere overnight.
  - £30 – staying with friends and/or family overnight.
- 6) **Determination 49: Financial loss Allowance – not to adopt this provision**
- 7) **Determination 50: Care Allowance – to adopt this provision to provide for reimbursement of necessary costs for the care of dependent children and adults (provided by informal or formal carers) and for personal assistance needs up to a maximum of £403 per month. Reimbursement must be for the additional costs incurred by members in order for them to carry out their approved duties and shall only be made on production of receipts from the carer.**
- 8) **Determination 51 : Civic Head Payment – not to adopt this provision**
- 9) **Determination 52 : Deputy Civic Head Payment – not to adopt this provision**

ii. **SLA Pilot Project for Youth Club for 8-13 and 14-18 year olds** (Minute 74iii October 2017 refers) This minute gives approval in principle to include the appropriate sums in the 2018/19 Estimates of Income and Expenditure for both the Pilot and established Youth Clubs

**RESOLVED - that**

- 1) **The £8,931.69 earmarked Youth Committee monies set aside in the Council's General Fund balances be used to meet any overspend in the Young Persons Project budget during 2017/18; and**
- 2) **the Young Persons Project heading in the Projects section of the Estimates of Income and Expenditure for 2018/19 be increased by £13,850.00 to reflect the maximum new costs from 1 April 2019 onwards of meeting the Council's obligations under its Service Level Agreements with the Caia Park Partnership.**

Members noted that in order to progress and develop the Budget for 2018/19 and to ascertain the Community Council's precept requirements it will now be necessary to obtain costings and work up the various budget requirements before determination.

**RESOLVED that the Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Community Council update and prepare budget costings to reflect the debate at this meeting and present the Draft 2018/19 Budget proposals to an early meeting of the Community Council.**

Signed as a correct record this 21st day of November 2017

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Chair