

Minutes of the Special Meeting of Acton Community Council held on Tuesday 5 November 2019 at Acton Community Resource Centre, Overton Way, Acton, Wrexham

Present:

Councillor	K Roberts (Chair)	Councillor	Ms S Jarvis (Vice Chair)
"	W Baldwin	"	Ms P Kidd *
"	M Davies	"	P Lloyd
"	Ms S Edwards	"	G Lowe
"	Mrs A Evans	"	M Pritchard
"	R Hardy	"	Mrs D Wallice *
"	Ms S Hope *	"	Ms L Williams *
	P D Jones *		1 Vacancy

* Absent

Also Present:

Mrs Carole Roberts, Clerk to the Council

82 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sian Hope, Paul Jones, Debbie Wallice and Lynne Williams.

83 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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

84 ANNUAL ESTIMATES OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR 2020/21 FINANCIAL YEAR

The Council considered information provided by the Clerk setting out progress against the 2019/20 budget and then commenced the budget setting process for 2020/21, by considering Priorities, Spending Powers, current budget headings and the implications of the Draft report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales together with any new expenditure the Council wishes to make provision for in the 2020/21 Financial Year

1. DRAFT REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Members gave consideration to the content of the Independent Remuneration Panel draft Annual Report for 2020/21 particularly Section 13 and Annexe 5 that relates specifically to Town and Community Councils. It was noted that the Panel had invited any comments on the draft to be submitted by 10 December 2019.

The Council noted it was the duty of the Clerk to make arrangements for correct payments to be made to all individuals entitled to receive them; Individual Members being able to opt out and decline to receive the £150. It was also noted that mandated payment for costs incurred and Members in receipt of a Band 1 or 2 Senior Salary from a Principal Council cannot receive any payment from the Community Council other than travel and subsistence expenses and reimbursement of costs of care. The requirement for the Community Council to publish details of all payments made to individual members in an annual Statement of Payments by 30 September each year following the end of the previous financial year was also noted.

An extract of Section 13 within the draft report relating specifically to Community and Town Councils was circulated to all members of the Council. Members debated the merits of encouraging diversity and greater participation in Local Democracy and the impact of opting to make financial loss allowance payments.

RESOLVED that the comments made above be submitted and the decision set out below will apply to all Members of the Community Council from 1 April 2020 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 2020/21 which will become effective from 1 April 2020 (subject to consideration of comments and objections received as part of the current consultation process) and the relevant budget provision under the heading of "Members Remuneration" should be included in the General Administration Section of the 2020/21 Budget:

- 1) **Determination 42: Expenses and Costs up to £150 per member – to include a sum of £2,400 in the Members Remuneration budget to be used for this purpose;**
- 2) **Determination 43: This provision for Councils in Group A does not apply to the Council**
- 3) **Determination 44: Senior Role Salaries – Not to adopt this provision**
- 4) **Determination 45: Reimbursement of Travel and Subsistence when undertaking approved duties: To adopt this provision and include a sum in the Members Remuneration budget to be used for this purpose 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 46: Reimbursement of subsistence expenses for attending approved duties outside the area of the Council – to adopt this provision and include a sum in the Members Remuneration budget to be used for this purpose; the maximum rates to be paid as set out below on the basis of receipted claims:**
 - **£28 per 24 hour period allowance for meals, including breakfast where not provided.**
 - **£200 – London overnight.**
 - **£95 – elsewhere overnight.**
 - **£30 – staying with friends and/or family overnight.**
- 6) **Determination 47: Financial Loss Allowance – to adopt this provision and include a sum in the Members Remuneration budget to be used for this purpose subject to any members who claim this allowance being able to demonstrate that the financial loss has been incurred**
- 7) **Determination 48: Care Allowance – to include a sum in the Members Remuneration budget to be used for this purpose 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 49 : Civic Head Payment – not to adopt this provision**
- 9) **Determination 50 : Deputy Civic Head payment – not to adopt this provision**

A number of background papers were then considered that had been circulated with the agenda to assist members in their deliberations, namely:

1. Extract of the Estimates and Precept Setting Minutes from 18 December 2018
2. Copy of the Clerk's Report on the Annual Investment Strategy for 2019/20

3. Copy of the Draft Provisional estimates for 2019/20 submitted to 18 December 2018 Council meeting
4. Copy of the Clerk's Report on the year-end accounts to 31 March 2019 as reported to the April 2019 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 26 November 2018 advising of the Section 137 Expenditure Limit for 2019-20
8. Current Year Receipts and Payments by Annual Budget Heading to 30 October 2019
9. Detailed Receipts and Payments by Budget Heading to 30 October 2019
10. Trial Balance for current year as at 30 October 2019

In respect of item 8 above the Clerk updated members on spending and savings against the current year budget provision.

2. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Members considered the 2019/20 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:-

- a. Members Remuneration is a nominal budget provision to reflect the Council's obligations and current decisions in respect of the Independent Remuneration Panel's Determinations for 2019/20. There will be some payments of the £150 allowance payment to members of the Council in March 2019. The budget includes provision for Care costs incurred by Members and could be extended to include financial loss compensation to members where the loss has actually occurred for attending approved duties
- b. Employers Costs: there will be an overspend due to the Clerk's hours being temporarily increased to full time for six months of the year. There are also implications for future year's budgets when the Clerk's Assistant Post is created (Minute 52.2 September 2019 refers)
- c. Annual Subscription: This budget will be overspent this year due to joining One Voice Wales from 1 October 2019. Provision will need to be made in 2020/21 for the full year subscription
- d. Audit Fees: The External Audit fee is still to be charged for the 2018/19 Audit. From 2019/20 the Wales Audit Office will be conducting the external audit and this may impact on the fees charged
- e. Conference fees/ Training for Staff: The budgets should be increased to reflect the Council's membership of One Voice Wales and eligibility to attend its Conferences and the potential for the Clerk's assistant to require training and attendance at conferences
- f. Website : This budget may be overspent due to the purchase of a ward based map and the review of the website to ensure compliance with the latest accessibility requirements by September 2020
- g. 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.

3. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS & OTHER PROJECTS

Members continued to consider the present year's budget expenditure item by item for existing Service Level Agreements and Other Projects. In respect of the existing Service Level Agreements, Members endorsed the Services being provided as representing good value for money and a wish to continue with and renew some of the Service Level Agreements due to end in March 2020. The merits of longer three year Service level Agreements were noted.

In respect of Other Projects the following matters were discussed:

- a. **Acton Community Resource Centre Service Level Agreement** requires regular reporting on performance monitoring. In 2018 the Community Council recently undertook the third of the two year reviews of this ten year Agreement which expires 31 March 2023. (Minute 68 October 2018 refers);
- b. **Annual Seasonal Park Ranger post at Acton Park:** the Agreement signed in 2018 has provided for the Community Council to fund this post for three years to September 2020;
- c. **CAB Outreach Worker:** The present Service Level Agreement ends on 31 March 2020 and the Clerk is negotiating a further three year SLA for this Service and the budget costs from 2020/21 onwards will be uplifted to reflect the inflationary costs within any new agreement
- d. **Maesydre Power House** – work to undertake the repairs will be planned for the spring of 2020, the budget will also be used to increase earmarked reserves for this work;
- e. **Acton Playground provision:** An overspend may be incurred if remedial work for the weed problem at the Ffordd Garmonydd Fenced play area requires replacement of the existing bark layer. The budget provision also includes an element to add to earmarked reserves for the future costs of replacing the three play areas
- f. **School Crossing patrols:** There will be an underspend on this budget due to the vacancy for the Dean Road Patrol which is expected to be filled shortly
- g. **Little Acton Community Centre:** the Community Council agreement made in December 2016 to fund the actual costs incurred by Wrexham CBC for the operation of the Little Acton Community Centre ends on 31 March 2020 The Council in October 2019 had approved the Task & Finish Group’s plan of action and had expressed an interest to Wrexham CBC in taking over responsibility but not ownership of the Little Acton Community Centre from 1 April 2020 SUBJECT to an extension to the current commitment and funding arrangement beyond 31 March 2020 if necessary on a cost neutral basis for a maximum of twelve months to enable the Feasibility study and Business Plan work to be completed.
It was noted that a response was awaited from Wrexham CBC before proceeding to commission the Condition Survey but that there would be a budget requirement for 2020/21;
- h. **Crime Prevention projects** have included a contribution to the drugs dog operation and the purchase of the Mini police uniforms. The pilot CCTV scheme was expected to commence before the year end subject to confirmation of responsibility for downloading data captured by the camera;

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.

4. NEW EXPENDITURE

There were no further new expenditure items proposed apart from the requirements as a result of joining One Voice Wales and the Clerk’s Assistant Officer Training that had been referred to earlier in the meeting

Members noted that in order to progress and develop the Budget for 2020/21 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 2020/21 Budget proposals to the December 2019 meeting of the Community Council.

**Councillor Kevin Roberts
Presiding Chair**

Signed as a correct record this 19th day of November 2019

Chair