



Devizes
Town Council

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DEVIZES TOWN **COUNCIL**

You are summonsed to attend a meeting of the Devizes Town Council Committee at the following, place and date.

Date: 17 October 2017

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Town Hall, St John's Street, Devizes

Enquiries: Town Hall - Tel: 01380 722160

Councillors:	Mrs Bridewell	Mrs Burton	Carter
	Corbett	Evans	Mrs Evans
	Gay	Geddes	Giraud-Saunders
	Godwin	Greenwood	Hopkins
	Johnson	Nash	Parsons
	Mrs Rose	Rowland	Mrs Shaw
	Stevens	Ms Von Berg	Wooldridge

AGENDA

1. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record and authorise the Chairman to sign the minutes of the Meetings of the Council held on the 27 June 2017 and 11 July 2017

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. DISCLOSURE(S) OF INTEREST

To receive any disclosures by a Councillor(s) and/or Officers in matters to be considered at this meeting in accordance with the provisions of Sections 94 or 117 of the Local Government Act 1972 or the National Code of Local Government Conduct.

4. To receive announcements and communications.
5. To answer questions (if any) under standing order No. 15.

6. MINUTES OF MEETINGS FOR INFORMATION

Since the last meeting of the Council on 27 June 2017 the following Committees have taken place whose minutes have been approved as a correct record and signed by the appropriate committee chairman.

The minutes of these meetings have been previously circulated to all members.

COMMITTEE NAME	COMMITTEE DATE
Planning	13 June 2017
Planning	27 June 2017
Planning	11 July 2017
Planning	25 July 2017
Planning	8 August 2017
Planning	22 August 2017
Planning	5 September 2017
Planning	19 September 2017
Recreation & Properties	30 May 2017
Recreation & Properties	11 July 2017
Recreation & Properties	22 August 2017
Community & Civic Resources	13 June 2017
Community & Civic Resources	25 July 2017
Community & Civic Resources	5 September 2017

NOTE: Before dealing with the next item (No 7) the Council will wish to consider whether or not to suspend Standing Order No 5 (members to stand when speaking). If the Standing Order is to be suspended, it must be done by way of a proposition, duly seconded and carried.

7. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – PROJECT LIST

Circulated alongside this agenda is a list detailing the current position with regard to ongoing and proposed projects.

8. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – NOTICE OF CONCLUSION OF AUDIT 2016/17

Members are reminded that at the meeting of the Council held on 13 June 2017, members resolved officers to submit the Annual Return including accounting and the annual governance statement in respect of Devizes Town Council for the 2016/17 financial year.

Grant Thornton UK LLP, the Council's external auditors returned the certified Annual Return on 27 September 2017.

Other matters not affecting their opinion but which they wished to draw to the attention of Devizes Town Council for the year ended 31 March 2016 was as follows;-

Internal Audit has ticked yes to internal control objective F (Petty Cash) but the authority does not hold petty cash.

'The Internal Auditor has answered 'No' to objective F in relation to Petty Cash. This should state 'not covered' as the Council does not operate a petty cash system. The Council should ensure that the Internal Auditor's report is reviewed before sending the Annual return to the external auditors. The Council should minute this process. If there are any errors in the Internal Audit report it should either be amended by the Internal Auditor or the Council should provide an explanation for the error.'

The above statement is incorrect the Internal Auditor answered 'Yes' to objective F and the Council does operate a petty cash system. The Admin & Finance Manager will write back to Grants Thornton UK LLP stating this.

Section 2, Accounting statements, Council tax Support Grant

'Council tax Support Grant should be included in Box 3. Council Tax Support grant of £5,997 has been incorrectly included in Box 2. Box 2 should state £556,477 and Box 3 should state £699,577. The Council should restate the 2017 figures on next year's Annual Return and write "Restated" beneath the £ sign on the 2017 column.

This is noted by officers and will be reflected in the 2017/18 Annual return.

Grant Thornton UK LLP will not be undertaking to audit in 2017/18. The appointment of new auditors is awaited by officers.

9. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – NOTICE OF CONCLUSION OF AUDIT 2016/17

Members are reminded that at the meeting of the Council held on 11 July 2017, members resolved officers to submit the Annual Return including accounting and the annual governance statement in respect of Roundway Parish Council for the 2016/17 financial year.

Grant Thornton UK LLP, the Council's external auditors returned the certified Annual Return on 27 September 2017.

This is the final audit in respect of Roundway parish Council

10. REPORT FOR DECISION – DRAFT ESTIMATES 2018/19

Recommendation

The Council is recommended to identify any amendments to the draft estimates or matters that need to be further explored, for the financial year 2018-19. The estimates will remain as draft until formal ratification and the setting of the precept in December.

Purpose of the Report

To consider the budgeted income and expenditure for the financial year 2018-19.

Background

Officers have prepared the draft budget for financial year 2018-19 in line with identified business activities and plans or those which are projected.

The devolution of services from Wiltshire Council continues to be high on the agenda. Negotiations have progressed over the past two years with little end result. The setting of budgets over that period have been hampered by a lack of information resulting in officers making assumptions regarding the potential services which are being/will not be provided by Wiltshire Council in the future.

Set out below is a commentary on the principal budget headings.

Explanation of Budget Headings

Revenue Budget

Officers have, where possible, held the budget at the 2017/18 level. The potential devolution of services from Wiltshire Council to Devizes Town Council will have a significant impact on these calculations.

Corporate

Democratic Services

This is a revenue budget for the cost of the democracy, and includes the cost of preparing and the servicing of meetings, working parties, officers attending meetings and consultation with the public.

Member Support

Members are encouraged to participate in training when available. The budget heading also provides funding for members to attend conferences and networking opportunities.

Twinning

Waiblingen will host the twinning weekend in 2018. The budget heading provides for the costs associated with the travel of the civic delegation to the twin town of Waiblingen. Additional to this is a moderate Ear Marked Reserve of £1876 will be increased on receipt of the European Union grant in 2017.

Civic & Ceremonial

The civic events along with the civic officers' allowances ensure that Devizes is able to uphold its civic traditions. In the past, consultation with the community has indicated that it is these kinds of events which make Devizes special.

Mayoral Allowance

This budget heading has been increased in line with inflation, in accordance with a council policy made some years ago. It would be for members to decide to increase or reduce this amount. It should be noted, however, that the Mayoral year is very demanding and the budget is intended to defray the costs of the year to ensure that financial considerations are not a barrier to taking on the role.

Communications

Due to an exercise to requote for the printing of the Town Council Messenger, officers are confident that this budget heading will not increase from the previous financial year.

With the development of the new website complete the budget has reduced to cover maintenance only.

Corporate Management

This cost centre is where the majority of senior management time is accounted for. It encompasses the cost of running the organisation, managing the various strategic corporate objectives and delivering Council decisions. It also includes items such as audit fees, professional advice and the annual report, which has been increased in line with actual costs during 2017/18.

Bank Interest

A larger precept demand in 2017/18 has increased the level of reserves held by the Council. Reserves will again be placed on deposit for different terms as appropriate and are constantly reviewed to maximise the return whilst interest rates remain very low.

Grants

Grace and Favour bookings & Free Lettings

Provided to organisations, which benefit the community of Devizes, technically there is no limit to the value of these bookings as they are allowed in accordance with Council policies. The income is allocated against the Venues income. There is a cost to the Council in terms of the buildings not being available for commercial bookings and in staffing and utility costs. Both cost headings have seen a reduction in 2017/18 and have been reduced accordingly.

General Grants

These have remained the same and are distributed in October and March of each year to organisations who apply. General grants payable have been increased to include the grants previously paid by Roundway Parish Council.

Annual Grants

There are a number of organisations in the Town who receive an annual grant. A new policy agreed this year does require that they need to make their application in writing. Historically the Council has taken the view that the activities they undertake for the town are worthy of regular direct support. The grant payable to Drews Pond Wood has been increased to include the grant previously paid by Roundway Parish Council.

Commercial Properties

The Commercial Property Management charges are at a contract price. Estimated repair costs remain the same as last year whilst legal fees fluctuate year to year depending on the number of lease renewals during the financial year.

There are 5 rent reviews scheduled for the 2018 -19 financial year.

Arts Development

Devizes Outdoor Celebratory Arts and Devizes Festival

The Council gives support for DOCA and The Devizes Festival provided by free use of its venues and in the case of DOCA direct financial support.

Venues – Town Hall & Corn Exchange

Expenditure

Officers have thoroughly reviewed these cost centres and have stripped back as far as possible without impacting on service delivery. Many of the cost centres relate to items which fluctuate with the usage

of the buildings. It is anticipated however that the provision of a new boiler in the Town Hall will reduce gas consumption. A new lease arrangement relating to the Merchant Suite has resulted in there being no requirement to provide for free usage to All In One Catering Ltd.

Income

Income headings have been adjusted to reflect a weighted average over the past three years with particular reference to the current financial year and an appreciation that budgets need to reflect achievable budgets.

An agreed amount of £21,257 has been included in Town Hall income to represent usage of the Town Hall as office accommodation. This will be cost neutral in terms of the 2018/19 estimates.

Devizes Leisure Centre

Devizes Town Council is subject to a 60-year agreement which commenced in 1988 which requires ongoing annual revenue funding. This is subject to a calculated formula.

Hillworth Park Cafe

The operation of the Park Cafe has been taken in house since September 2015. Regular financial reports relating to the operation of the Park café are reported to members. Income derived from the Café is weather reliant and impacted by activities and special events in Hillworth Park. Officers will focus on maximising income during the winter months by the increased use of social media and additional events during this period

Community Spaces Central Support

This cost centre has seen a substantial increase in costs due to the introduction of services previously under the control of Roundway Parish Council, the potential devolution of services from Wiltshire Council and the non-Park Café costs associated with Hillworth Park.

The continuing squeeze on the finances of Wiltshire Council and the resultant effect on the lack of upkeep of Wiltshire Council owned play areas explains the need for a significant provision in respect of play area maintenance.

Officers have cut back the budget in respect of leased vehicles to one with the successful purchase of an electric vehicle during the 2016/17 financial year.

Officers have now gone through a season of deterring the gulls in the Garden Trading Estate and Hopton Industrial Estate which has resulted in a smaller provision in this cost centre.

A provision for extra grass cuts in areas around the Town which are not normally undertaken by the Town Council should cover the short fall in this area by Wiltshire Council.

The provision of additional support in street cleaning will have a significant impact on the visual impact of the Town. Whether this be the TUPE of Wiltshire Council or the recruitment of staff, this cost centre is intended to cover employee costs and equipment.

Upon the request of members this budget provision in respect of road improvements is intended to make a contribution to local initiatives.

An accurate reflection of the costs of utilities within the Park Centre is now included within this cost centre.

The plans to improve the facilities at Green Lane are gathering momentum and along with current users and potential new users of the site are finally bringing to the fore the potential of this site. Although the redevelopment of the site in respect as a sporting hub will require funding from a number of funding providers, it is anticipated that a provision in respect of the Town Council is desirable at this stage.

The Council will continue to outsource activities such as the watering and the buying in of plants although the main grounds maintenance delivery will be delivered through in house staff. In the past full outsourcing has been tested however due to the relatively small value of the contract sum and the nature of the contract complexity, it makes it difficult to realise savings of enough significance to make it worth the reduction in service flexibility.

If members wish to reduce these budgets then there will need to be clarity of expectation as to where the reductions in service will be made.

Public Conveniences

The Town Council took over the provision of the Devizes Superloo and the Toilets on the Green in April 2016 and as a result TUPE'd over two members of staff. The operation of the facilities by the Town Council over an 18 month period has resulted in more confidence in the costs of utilities and water usage. Income is consistent and varies little from year to year.

Christmas Lights

Christmas Business Trees

It was agreed this year to continue with the project which helps to increase the amount of Christmas light displays in the town.

Christmas Festival & Lights

Officers supported by the Christmas Lights Working Party tendered for a new installation contract in 2016. Whilst this makes budgeting more challenging, indications are that any change should be in line with the current budget.

Admin Support

All costs have been reviewed and in the case of insurance reduced. The Town Council entered into a new three year contract with Zurich in April 2016.

For many years an amount of £1000 has been placed in the estimates in respect of the costs of recruitment. Officers have increased this significantly as the amount is considered inadequate particularly if the Town Council is required to recruit a member of the senior management team.

The provision for professional advice has however increased significantly in the 2016/17 and 2017/18 financial years on the assumption that legal costs will be incurred with the potential devolution of assets from Wiltshire Council.

Cemetery

Costs incurred and income derived from the operation of Devizes Cemetery are in line with data collected in the first 5 months of the 2017/2018 financial year although this is notoriously difficult to estimate.

The Cemetery Lodge is currently rented out at an amount of £700 per calendar month with a tenant who has been in occupation since July 2015. A significant piece of work will need to be undertaken during the 2018/19 financial year with the replacement of the existing fascia and guttering being undertaken due to them rotting out.

Community Safety

The Council has currently agreed to further the Town's CCTV system to a value of £18000.

Town Centre Management

The Town Council uses this budget to support economic regeneration projects. With the development of groups such as the retailers this is likely to be an ongoing demand on this project.

Salaries

Whilst salaries have seen a moderate increase, an estimated increase of 1% has been provided on the assumption that current member salaries will increase to that percentage. A number of staff members have also elected to join the Wiltshire Council Pension Scheme during the current financial year.

The salaries in respect of 2018/19 reflect the current management structure.

Future Operational Activities

As set out in the introduction to this report officers have increased the enhanced service provision on the assumption that this will be required during the 2018/19 financial year in order to maintain the upkeep of the Town in line with the expectations of residents of Devizes.

Capital Expenditure

Items, which are not regular revenue expenditure, are identified separately. Items of capital expenditure are placed in this cost centre after discussion between staff members, senior managers and members.

Conference Chairs

Many of the chairs utilised by our venues are coming to the end of their life cycle and officers have committed to the replacement of these chairs over a rolling cycle of a number of years.

Flooring Ceres Hall

The sanding a sealing of the floor in the Ceres Hall in the Corn Exchange was budgeted in the 2017/18 financial year. Quotes have been sought and with this budget amount being insufficient and additional £3,000 will need to be budgeted in the 2018/19 financial year.

Park Café kitchen/serving area extension

The income generated by the Park Café is limited by the area in which food and drinks can be prepared. This expenditure should enable a larger area for food preparation and its provision to the general public.

Light & Sound Systems – Corn Exchange

This budget heading has been included on the request of members.

Gazebos

Provision for the replacement of Gazebos utilised for a number of events throughout the year.

Redecoration of Town Hall

The Office, Mayors Parlour and the entrance areas on the ground floor of the Town Hall have not been decorated for a period of years and are looking shabby. This coupled with holes and patches caused by the installation of the heating system feeding off of the new boiler have exasperated the situation.

iPAD Air – For members

This represents the cost of providing each of the 21 members with an iPad Air to access Council information and planning applications. The cost will include a maintenance contract with our IT contractors.

Front Loader for Kubota & Flail Mower

These capital items have been included on the request of the Parks & Cemetery supervisor in the furtherance of the duties of the Office Spaces team.

Earmarked Reserves

In addition to the budget, officers have attached a copy of the Council's Earmarked Reserves. These are funds which have been accumulated for specific projects where it has not been possible to raise the finance in a single financial year.

Options Considered

The Council needs to decide if they feel that the proposed budget is in line with the level of services it wishes the Council to deliver in 2018/19

Implications & Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

The budget reflects the Council's ability to fund its Financial and Resource needs for the financial year 2018/19.

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

The Council will be considering this matter under its power of General Competence.

Environmental Implications

Officers are not aware of any environmental implications associated with this decision.

Risk Assessment

Not setting a budget would leave the Council open to challenge by the auditors for financial mismanagement. In addition, the Council will not be able to set a precept and therefore will have its precept imposed by Wiltshire Council.

Crime and Disorder

Officers are not aware of any implications Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder act 1998.

11. TO PASS THE FOLLOWING SEALING RESOLUTION

THAT the Common Seal of the Council be affixed to or the Town Clerk do sign on behalf of the Council

where appropriate any Orders, Deeds or Documents necessary to give effect to any of the matters and recommendations contained in the reports received and adopted at this meeting or other decisions of the Council thereat.

12. QUESTION TIME

A short time is allowed at the discretion of the Town Mayor for councillors to ask questions on matters which are not on the current agenda but which are related to matters which have been previously discussed on an agenda relevant to the committee.

At least 24 hours' notice must be given to officers of the intended question. All other matters should be raised on an agenda and the request should be submitted through the Town Clerk

13. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

At the Chairman's discretion, members of the public attending the meeting will be allowed to ask questions addressed to the Chairman concerning the administration, function or responsibilities of the Council or upon a matter, which was the subject of debate at the meeting.

A person may also be permitted to make a statement or address the Council upon a matter of concern to that person which is relevant to local government, or to the Council's administration or upon a subject, which may be of general interest to the Council. A time limit of 5 minutes per person will be permitted, but this may be extended at the Chairman's discretion and a maximum period of 20 minutes has been allocated by the Council for this item of business.

Deputy Town Clerk