



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: 12th October 2023

Time: 7.00 pm

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

Enquiries: Town Hall - Tel: 01380 723333

Councillors:	Bridewell	Britten	Brown
	Corbett	East	Gay
	Geddes	Giraud-Saunders	Greenwood
	Hopkins	Hoult	Hunter
	Nash	Oliver	Ormerod
	Pennington	Rose	Stevens
	Tanner	Wallis	Wooldridge

AGENDA

1. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record and authorise the Chairman to sign the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 12th September 2023.

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 meeting of the Council on 15th June 2023 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
Special Full Council	12/09/2023
Planning	20/06/2023
Planning	04/07/2023
Planning	18/07/2023
Planning	01/08/2023
Planning	15/08/2023
Planning	29/08/2023
Planning	12/09/2023
Planning	26/09/2023
Recreation & Properties	20/06/2023
Recreation & Properties	01/08/2023
Recreation & Properties	12/09/2023
Community & Civic Resources	04/07/2023
Community & Civic Resources	15/08/2023
Community & Civic Resources	26/09/2023
Personnel	01/08/2023
Personnel	29/08/2023
Personnel	19/09/2023

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 – NOTICE OF CONCLUSION OF AUDIT 2022/23

Members are reminded that at the meeting of the Council held on 15th June 2023, members resolved officers to submit the Annual Return including Accounting and the Annual Governance Statement in respect of Devizes Town Council for the 2022/23 financial year.

PKF Littlejohn LLP, the Council's external auditors, returned the certified Annual Return on 9th September 2023.

The audit certificate states that the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to auditor attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met

There were some minor matters that the Audit has brought to the Council's attention which are as follows:

The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review.

- The figure in Section 2, Box 7 of the prior year comparative column did not agree to the prior year final signed AGAR. Box 7 for the comparative column should read £527,684. Subsequently, Box 1 for the current year should read £527,684.
- Box 6 in the current year should read £970,659.
- Section 2 was not signed by the Responsible Finance Officer before approval by the meeting.

8. REPORT FOR DECISION – TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

Recommendation

That the Council reviews the Draft Town Council Strategic Plan for period 2023/27 and decides if it is ready for adoption.

Purpose of the Report

To agree the Town Council Strategic Plan 2023/27.

Background

Following several meetings of the Strategic Plan working party and sessions with both Councillors and staff, a draft Strategic Plan has been developed. After some debate, the plan has two distinct elements. one being how the Council sees itself developing as an organisation over the 5-year plan period; and with the second element setting out a vision for the town's development.

Each element has its own vision with the Town Council's vision being *“Devizes Town Council will seek to be at the heart of local decision making that affects our community whether they are by the Council its self, the principal authority or other service providers, to ensure such decisions support strong community cohesion and that such decisions are truly open so that the Council can demonstrate transparency in all its operations”*

The plan then goes on to set out five key priority areas where the Council will meet its ambitions through positive change, setting out what these changes are and suggesting some strategic projects that will help deliver this positive change. The working party also felt that as part of the plan there needed to be some measurable goals by which it can monitor the success of the ambitions the Council has set itself.

Whilst the plan is very much centred around what the Town Council can influence directly, it does also recognise the importance of working with stakeholders and other service providers to help achieve the proposed ambitions.

The Council now needs to decide if the document is ready for adoption, requires further amendment or further consultation.

Options Considered

The committee needs to decide.

- If the plan is acceptable for adoption
- If the plan needs any further amendment
- If the plan needs further consultation.

Implications and Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

The plan itself sets out the ambitions of the Council and it will have financial and potential resource implications, but these will become clear through specific decisions that will deliver the plan's ambitions.

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

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

Environmental Implications

Officers are unaware of any environmental implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Risk Assessment

Officers are unaware of any risk implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Crime and Disorder

Officers are not aware of any issues the Council should consider under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

9. REPORT FOR DECISION – DRAFT ESTIMATES 2023/2024

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 2024/25. 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 2024/25

Background

Officers have prepared the draft budget for financial year 2024/25 in line with identified business activities and plans, or those which are projected. As part of the preparation of the figures, officers met with members of the finance group before completing the circulated draft. [[Doc 9/1](#)].

As with previous years, salary costs have been apportioned across cost centres. It should also be noted that the apportionment exercise is based on an assessment of time spent on tasks. In 2022 the national pay award for public sector agreed a flat rate increase to staff, with an extra day's leave. At this stage the 2023 national pay agreement has not been settled and for budget year 2023/24 at this stage discussions have not started.

In the last budget energy prices were of major concern as we were seeing a significant upward trend in prices. We have now fixed many of the utility tariffs for the next year so have held budgets steady for the next 12 months.

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

Working with the finance working party, the budget been reviewed with and with the exception of the critical work needed within venues, again there are no departmental capital projects, however the budget still contains member-led project initiatives. However, officers have shared their concerns around staffing resources to deliver ever-growing Council and community aspirations and following a Personnel committee meeting on the 23 September it was agreed additional funding would be included within the budget for the Council to agree.

Explanation of Budget Headings

Revenue Budget

Officers have increased revenue budgets based at this time on average 3% increase in charges, but it should be noted that the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rose by 6.7% in the 12 months to August 2023. Although this is on a slight downward trend in the 12 months to July 2022, officers are still concerned that the contraction on the economy is having a significant impact on our revenue generation potential within some departments.

Markets

Markets, both indoor and outdoor, have performed well over the last 12 months with 10% projected growth on 2022/23, however this is still behind the ambitious member-agreed budget of 17%. Whilst there was a tariff increase this year that helped to offset the significant jump in utility prices, much of the growth was as a result of higher occupancy rates. Whilst officers will continue to look for alternative market events for different days, these take time to establish and as such any income generation potential is weak.

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 whether virtually or face to face, should opportunities present themselves. Other than membership subscriptions, there is no significant variance in the budget and this variance is a lowering of an anticipated rise in the previous year.

Twinning

The twinning exchange in 2023 which was hosted by Devizes wiped all the earmarked reserves from the last EU grant application. In 2024 The Mayor and an officer will need to travel to Waiblingen for the 2024 twinning exchange. It is not clear if there will also be an exchange with Tornio in Finland.

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 during 2024/25 has been held at the 2023/24 level.

Communications

This cost centre continues to be important for the Council and there is some increase to reflect that. Over the last year we have had to update some of the Council's older website, which may need to continue in 2024.

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. There are no significant variances in the budget.

Bank Interest

Higher interest rates have helped to boost income and this projected income level has been included in the 2024-25 budget.

Grants

Grace and Favour bookings & Free Lettings

Provided to organisations which benefit the community of Devizes. There is technically no limit to the value of these bookings as they are allowed in accordance with Council policies. Notional income is allocated as Venues' income and offset against a grace and favour grant. Whilst bookings are generally down, organisations who know they can have a free booking will take that opportunity.

General Grants

These have remained the same and are distributed in October and March of each year to organisations who apply.

Annual Grants

Two organisations in the Town receive an annual grant, Drews Pond Wood and Devizes Museum. Town Council policy requires that both organisations make their applications in writing. Historically the Council has taken the view that the activities they undertake for the town are worthy of regular direct support.

Commercial Properties

The commercial property management charges are at a contract price. Officers are conscious there will be intense pressure on businesses over the next year and have continued to reflect this in the Bad Debt provision and Vacant Property provisions.

The rent reviews scheduled for the 2024-25 financial year are not expected to see any growth, but it important that we continue to make a provision for bad debt. The finance and commercial properties working parties have asked to set some funding to better assess some of the properties' condition.

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 again reviewed these cost centres and reflected costs including salary costs. Whilst many costs relating to the venues are fixed in nature it is expected to see costs grow during the budget period.

Income

Since November 2022 there has been a significant reduction in venues revenue and bookings, this has been compounded by the bankruptcy of a regular hirer and a significant reduction in bookings from organisations like the NHS and Wiltshire Council.

Devizes Leisure Centre

This is subject to a 60-year agreement which commenced in 1988 and which requires ongoing annual revenue funding. This is subject to a calculated inflation-based formula which starts to rise in the current year.

As part of the same agreement, the Town Council does have seats on the leisure centre Joint Management Committee. Last year we underestimated the rise increase, but we are hopeful that this has been corrected for 2024/25.

Hillworth Park Cafe

Over the last year there has been a great deal of scrutiny of the café operation and some cost savings have been made to reduce the operational deficit. Cost of staff is still the major expense for the café. Whilst revenue is heavily weather- dependent it has been a reasonable year in 2023.

Community Spaces Central Support

This is by far the largest cost centre for the Council. Costs have now settled down and are a fairly constant year on year cost.

Overall, the budget projection is in line with 2023/4. Watering was brought in-house last year and will be continued this year. Whilst it was agreed to buy a road sweeper in 2022, its age is starting to show and is unlikely to be cost effective, therefore within the current budget officers are again looking at leasing a new vehicle. Trees and woodland will continue to be a cost as we continue to carry out work to trees within the town centre.

One additional cost in this cost centre are repairs to the cemetery chapel.

Public Conveniences

There is no question that the provision of the “Devizes Superloo” is a costly service, but there is an expectation that as a council we provide safe and clean public toilet facilities in the town centre during the day. In the early part of 2023 a card payment scheme was introduced which is helping revenue, but many from the regular customer demographic still prefer cash.

Christmas Lights

Christmas Business Trees

Once again it was agreed to continue with this project, which helps to increase the level of Christmas light displays in the town, although with the current economic climate we are expecting a lower take-up.

Christmas Festival & Lights

The current budget is taken up by much of the current installation contract and as such leaves little balance for repairs and replacement, therefore a small increase has been budgeted.

Admin Support

Where possible officers have kept costs in line with 2023-24.

The biggest cost saving is staff recruitment and maintenance contracts, which have been underbudget.

Cemetery

Costs incurred and income derived from the operation of Devizes Cemetery vary considerably year on year and remain notoriously difficult to estimate, however officers are seeking to keep expenditure levels in line with the current year.

Community Safety

The Council increased support for the Town’s CCTV in 2022/23 and this level has been maintained in 2024/25 budget.

Town Centre Management

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

CATG/ LHFIFG Road improvements

Each project sent by the Town Council to the Local Highways and Footpath Improvement Group requires a contribution from the Town Council. This has been at a constant level for some time, but it should be noted that there are a number of historic projects in the pipeline which are likely to come to fruition over the next 12 months. Officers have reduced most capital expenditure to member-led initiatives.

Shambles Refurbishment

This cost relates to the ongoing preparatory work associated with the proposed refurbishment of the Shambles in Devizes.

Youth Service Provision

This fund will support the Council youth outreach programme.

Crammer

Following community interest in the Crammer condition, this will help with any projects that may come forward.

Roof Repairs

The roof has now been checked by several contractors and been fully surveyed, and a phased approach to repairs is being planned.

Earmarked Reserves

In addition to the budget ([Doc 9/1-9](#)), officers have attached a copy of the Council's Earmarked Reserves ([Doc 9/2](#)). 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 it feels that the proposed budget is in line with the level of services it wishes the Council to deliver in 2023/24, and what further amendments need to be considered before their adoption in December 2023.

Implications & Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

The budget reflects the Council's ability to fund its Financial and Resource needs for the financial year 2024/25.

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.

10. REPORT FOR DECISION – ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

Recommendation

To acknowledge the receipt of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds and advise officers if there are immediate plans to spend them.

Purpose of the Report

To advise the Committee of a CIL receipt and identify any immediate projects that would benefit from this funding.

Background

At the Beginning of October, the Council is holding £in unallocated Community Infrastructure Levy receipts.

Set out below is a record of receipts received and allocations made.

Community Infrastructure Levy Receipts as at October 23			
Planning Application Number	Amount	Tranche	
16/04371/FUL	£37,610.28	tranche 1 of 3	Browfort extra care home 55 Units
16/11230/FUL	£7,514.60		ANZAC House redevelopment 66 Units
16/04371/FUL	£43,878.60	tranche 2 of 3	Browfort extra care home 55 Units
1 of 3 18/00	£5,679.14	tranche 1 of 3	Northgate Street Residential Development
Total	£94,682.68	<i>Allocated to Green Lane Project</i>	

Planning Application Number	Amount	Tranche	
18/03223/FUL	£ 4,558.67	tranche 1 of 3	Bungalows at Browfort - 6 Units
16/04371/FUL	£ 43,878.66	tranche 3 of 3	Browfort extra care home 55 Units
18/03223/FUL	£ 5,318.44	tranche 2 of 3	Bungalows at Browfort - 6 Units
Total	£53,755.77	<i>Allocated to projects 2022/23</i>	

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Planning Application Number	Amount	Tranche	Development
18/00786/FUL	£ 4,558.67	tranche 2&3 of 3	Northgate Street Residential Development 3 units
18/03223/FUL	£ 5,318.44	tranche 3 of 3	Bungalows at Browfort - 6 Units
17/01741/FUL	£ 2,571.25	tranche 2 of 3	Houses at West view crescent
18/07692/REM	£73,879.78	Tranche 1of 3	Development at Quakers Road.
Total	£95,020.81	<i>Allocated to projects 2022/23</i>	

Planning Application Number	Amount	Tranche	Development
16/11928/ful	1075.25	tranche 1 of1	Housing Development - 45 New Park Street
18/00800/ful	5397.74	tranche 1 of 2	New Bunglaow - 26 Northgate Gardens
Total	£6472.99	<i>Allocated to projects 2022/23</i>	

Planning Application Number	Amount	Tranche	Development
18/07692/REM	£86,193.07	Tranche 2of 3	Development at Quakers Road.
15/05550/ful	£2,975.00	tranche 1 of1	14 Market Place
Total	£89,168.07	<i>£ 14679.67 Allocated to projects 2022/23</i>	

Planning Application Number	Amount	Tranche	Development
18/07692/REM	£86,193.07	Tranche 3of 3	Development at Quakers Road.
19/01881/FUL	£1,832.32	Tranche 1of 1	St Peters - 5 New units
Total	£88,025.39		

Planning Application Number	Amount	Tranche	Development
19/09421/ful	£5,511.00	1 of 1	Cedars Development - London Road
18/07387/FUL	£1,176.76	1 of 1	Mayenne Place
Total	£6,687.76		

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Planning Application Number	Amount	Tranche	Development
20/ 08329/Tran	£7,594.98	1 of 1	Land at corner
19/03820/FUL	£2,677.01	1 of 1	Former Cornerstone
Total	£10,271.99		

Total CIL Received to date	£444,085.46		
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CIL Allocation - 2019/21

	Spent	Allocated
Green Lane Project Minute - 479	£ 94,682.68	
Play Areas	£ 133,849.24	
Devizes Budo Club Minute -541		60,000
Gateway Station Project Minute - 442	£ 5,153.00	26,847
Table tennis Table for Hillworth Park - Minute 284	£ 5,927.00	
Assize Court Project - Min 250	£ 25,000.00	25,000
Total	£ 264,611.92	£ 111,847.00

CIL Balance Held	
Total Receipts to 2022	£433,813.47
Less Funding Spent or allocated to date	£ 376,458.92
Balance	£ 57,354.55
New receipts in 2023	£10,271.99
Balance available for Projects	£ 67,626.54

CIL Regulations state that this proportion of funds must be used 'to support the development of the local area by funding:

- (a) The provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or
- (b) Anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area.'

This gives Parish and Town Councils considerable freedom to spend their proportion of CIL on things that address the impacts of developments on the area.

Examples include:

- Improvements to council venues
- New / improved play areas
- Provision of affordable housing
- Preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan (providing it addresses the demands that development places on the area)
- Planning Application Fees – monies can be used towards a planning application fee that relates to community proposals

As we moved into 2023, some of the CIL funding was getting close to its five-year spending deadline therefore it was agreed that CIL funding would be used to upgrade play areas. In addition, £25,000 of the pledged £50,000 has been given to the Assize Court project

Options Considered

That the Committee acknowledges receipt of £8,520.08 for 2023 and the Balance available for Projects held of £143,130.79

- a) Identifies projects that meet the spending requirement;
- b) Decides at this time there is no project that requires the immediate allocation of CIL funding

To ensure transparency the Town Councils publish the following information each financial year:

- Total CIL receipts;
- Total expenditure;
- A summary of what the CIL was spent on;
- Total amount of receipts retained at the end of the reported year from that year and previous years.

Implications and Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

The financial or resource implications for the Council associated with this decision are set out in the report.

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

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

Environmental Implications

Officers are unaware of any environmental implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Risk Assessment

Officers are unaware of any risk implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Crime and Disorder

Officers are not aware of any issues the Council should consider under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

11. REPORT FOR DECISION – ANNUAL REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS

Recommendation

That the Council reviews its current Sanding Orders and decides if it wishes to make any amendments before adopting them for the civic year 2023/24.

Purpose of the Report

To agree the rules under which the Council and its committees transact business.

Background

For clarity and consistency, the Council must adopt a set of rules under which it operates. These rules are called Standing Orders.

Standing Orders & Financial Regulations are reviewed annually to ensure that they are fit for purpose, A copy of the current standing version orders is circulated alongside this agenda.

Standing Orders set out rules relating to meetings of the Council and its committees, included voting and conduct and the duties and powers delegated to committees and officers.

Financial Regulation includes accounting regulations, procedures for seeking tenders & quotations, the setting of estimates, banking arrangements and insurance.

Whilst there is a proposed governance review to be undertaken by the Community & Civic Resources committee, it would be helpful to review Standing Orders generally to ensure there are no other issues that need to be addressed.

Options Considered

To decide if the Council wishes to re-adopt the rules relating to meetings as set out in Devizes Town Council's Standing Orders, subject to any changes that may come forward as part of the governance review.

Implications and Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

Officers are unaware of any Finance and Resource implication for the Council associated with this decision

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

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

Environmental Implications

Officers are unaware of any environmental implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Risk Assessment

Not transacting business under an agreed set of Standing Orders could give rise to a challenge of a decision at a later stage.

Crime and Disorder

Officers are not aware of any issues the Council should consider under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

12. 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.

13. QUESTION TIME

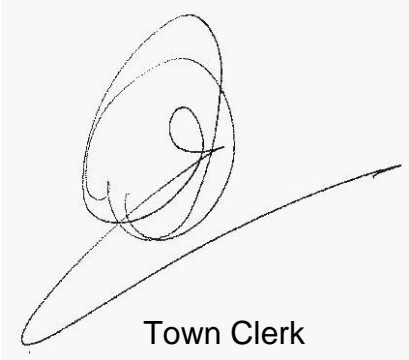
A short time is allowed at the discretion of the Town Mayor for councillors to ask questions on matters which are not on the current agenda but which are related to matters which have been previously discussed on an agenda relevant to the committee.

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

14. 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.



Town Clerk

