

Minutes of the SPC Finance Committee held on Thursday 12th January 2023 at 7pm at the Civic Hall, Uppermill.

Present: Councillors : S. Al- Hamdani (SA-H) (Chairman)

G. Sheldon (GS)

B. Lord (BL)

H. Bishop (HB)

L. Dawson (LD)

RFO: J Price (JP); Clerk: K Allott (KA)

549. Apologies for Absence Cllr M Woodvine (MW), K. Phillips (KP), Cllr J Hudson (JH)

550. Declarations of interest: None declared

551. Minutes from the last meeting Thursday 8th December 2022

These minutes were accepted as correct and signed off at the meeting by the Chairman.

552. Matters Arising

None

553. Proposed Budget 2023-2024

The RFO shared his budget plan with Councillors and it was discussed.

Cllr GS queried the Communications budget where the £1.4k cost of advertising with Saddleworth Independent had been taken out and added to the miscellaneous code. Cllr S A-H advised it would be earmarked towards the cost of improving or replacing our website. No further queries on Communications and it was accepted.

Councillors accepted the Environment budget with no challenges or queries.

Assets – there was some discussion around the cemetery as the current year predicting a £5k surplus and next year predicted to break even. The Clerk advised this is because of the additional work we need to have carried out next year on maintenance to comply with Health & Safety, but once this is done the following year there should be less expenditure as it will be only a case of regular upkeep.

There was some discussion around energy costs and the RFO advised he was estimating the costs to be 3 x more than current budget as our fixed term contract ends in June but it may actually not be as much as that as costs are beginning to fall now.

Cllr HB queries the cleaning costs this current year. The clerk advised we were in a 3 year contract with Shorrocks which ends Sept. She will be looking at different quotes with a view to getting those costs down.

Cllr HB queried the code and budget for security staff. The RFO explained it was self-funding as we pay it but then charge the hirer. After some discussion it was agreed this would be recoded to 730 security staff income.

Administration- Councillors agreed to keep the Chairman's allowance at £,1750. There was some discussion around accountability; and that a record of expenditure should be shared with the Clerk/RFO. It was agreed we need to set up a Task & Finish Group to look into what the allowance should be used on and this item will be added to the next Full Council agenda (*post meeting note - too late to add to 23 January meeting – will be added to February meeting*).

Our current IT provision was discussed, the RFO advised there was money allocated in the budget for this and the committee agreed with Asset's recommendation for the Clerk to look into quotes for upgrading the current system.

There was some discussion around the budget allocated for elections and the neighbourhood plan.

It was agreed that we would transfer the £7k election allocated this year into reserves and then allocate an additional £3,500 to be carried into the next financial year.

It was agreed to allocate £3,500 from 2022-3 budget for the Neighbourhood Plan consultation into a reserve ahead of spend next year and to zeroise the 2023-4 budget.

Cllr HB asked for information the Rochdale United Charities. Cllr BL explained that SPC are paid to administer the Charity which is a hardship fund, and that the Clerk had negotiated an increase from £2,400 to £2,750 as it had been the same price for a number of years, although staffing costs and fixed costs had all increased considerably.

The budget review was concluded with a discussion about the Precept. We are legally bound to present a balanced budget. To achieve this it was recommended that the Precept be increased by £1.19 to £25.50 per household (an increase of 4.9%) and that £30k be transferred from Reserves to cover the unusually high increase in energy costs. OMBC have also confirmed that a grant of £13,490 will be at least maintained next year. Reserve guidance is that they are held at 3-6 months of expenditure. Currently SPC is holding approx. 7 months but this will reduce over the next few months until the next Precept receipt in April 2023.

The Committee agreed that we request a precept increase of 4.9% and that £30k be drawn down from reserves and the budget be recommended to full Council for approval.

554. Assets' Recommendation re Civic Hall refurbishment

.Asset's had agreed at their last meeting, after receiving quotes for decorating and new flooring, that they would like to go ahead with refurbishing just the main entrance, stairs and bar area and leave the Council Chamber until next year; approx £15,000. After some discussion, the Clerk was asked to provide further detailed costings and it was agreed to defer this to the next Finance meeting.

555. Items for next Agenda

New Banking Quotes/Arrangements

Assets' Recommendation re Civic Hall refurbishment

556. AOB

None

557. Next Meeting Dates

Thursday 9th March at 7pm.