



## BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Finance Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Arms Everytne House, Quay Road, Blyth NE24 2AS on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2014 at 6.30pm.

**Present:**

**Councillors:**

K Ellis (Chair), J R Potts (Vice-Chair), B W Elliott, A Gibbs-Barton, K Nisbet, R Parker (Mayor), O Potts and J Reid.

**Officers:**

Sue Noddings – Town Clerk (Corporate Services)  
Stephen Rickitt – Town Clerk (Democratic Services)  
Sean Robinson – Assets Officer  
Liam Forsyth - Committee Clerk

Members of the Public: 2

**044/14/01: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor G T Knox.

**045/14/02: DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST AND GRANTS OF DISPENSATION**

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) wished to note that all Councillors were granted a dispensation for the budget setting process as Council tax payers, as granted on 19 September 2013.

## **046/14/03: MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE 7<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2013**

The Minutes of the Finance Committee held on 7 November 2013 were **AGREED** by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

### **047/14/04: UPDATE ON THE FINANCIAL REPORTS:-**

#### 4.1 Update on the Co-Operative Bank

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) noted that she had been kept informed by the bank regarding ongoing developments. It was noted that any investigations involving the role of the Co-op's previous managing director were likely to have no effect on Blyth Town Council's account.

#### 4.2 Update on the Investment Accounts Future Investments

An update was provided by the Town Clerk (Corporate Services).

The Committee **AGREED** that they would you continue with the pattern of investments currently operational.

#### 4.3 Update on Management Control Reports

An update was provided by the Town Clerk (Corporate Services). It was commented that the focus had been upon highlighting committed expenditure.

#### 4.4 Budgetary Update and Revisions

An outline was provided regarding committed expenditure concerning the Assets Committee and including areas such as playgrounds and the refurbishments and maintenance of the Broadway Toilets.

### **048/14/05: THE BUDGET & PRECEPT FOR 2014/2015**

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor K Ellis provided the Committee with an outline of the context and background information concerning potential partnership working arrangement with Northumberland County Council.

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) enquired as to how the proposal from the Town Clerk (Democratic Services) regarding the grants officer had arisen from. Councillor K Ellis commented that this had arisen from a

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Labour group meeting and was in order to address misgivings with the spreadsheet system and related legality.

The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) commented that she was concerned relating the lack of information regarding the post and associated expenditure. It was also commented that the Full Council had only recently agreed the proposed staff structure for the coming year. It was further noted that it was her belief that this sort of advice would be better provided by experts and that it had already been proposed that Blyth Town Council use the Services of Thom Bradley's team at CVA. Councillor A Gibbs-Barton commented that whilst he understood this theory, that he did not believe that this was the responsibility of Blyth Town Council.

Councillor K Ellis replied that as Northumberland County Council is set to cut its funding to the voluntary sector that there is a need to explore new avenues and areas.

Councillor B W Elliott sought clarification regarding areas in the proposal and areas such as proposed spending in the Community Grants Committee. Regarding the Community Grants Committee, Councillor JR Potts Commented That the Proposed Increase Involved the Amalgamation Two Previous Subheadings within the Accounts Related to Ward Spending As Well As a Small Increase to Acknowledge the Demand for Community, Grants within Blyth.

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) Commented That the Proposal Represented a Structured Allocation.

Discussion was then made regarding the proposal to subdivide the funds for Community Grants, in order to allocate funds specifically for community organisations, such as community centres within the town.

Councillor A Gibbs Barton admitted that he was against the split as it implies presupposing an agreement to provide funding to the community centres.

Councillor J R Potts provided an outline of what represented a Community Organisation, noting how this had arisen from the development of the application and its associated form.

The Committee considered the revised budget proposals together with a report suggesting that a provision was made for a Grants Officer contingent upon an examination of the need for that post.

Councillor J R Potts commented that he sought clarification regarding the proposed assets budget, noting that he would be seeking further

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information in a broken down format. The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) stated that she would provide more detail in advance of the Council Meeting to be held on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

The Mayor, Councillor R Parker commented and explained how it was his belief that this represented the best proposal for Blyth Town Council, citing such areas as the provision of five new dedicated members of the partnership workforce and the enhanced input that would be experienced.

Discussion was then held regarding practical expenses, including the potential costs of leasing grass cutting machines, road sweepers and the practical implications of delivering an enhanced maintenance strategy.

Councillor J R Potts commented that this increase representative third of the budget and reiterated the need for if such a project is to proceed - that it works, and is based on a legally binding partnership agreement.

Councillor A Gibbs-Barton enquired as to whether there is an update regarding potential capping of the parish councils across England and whether this would as rumoured, be based upon a percentage increase. The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) commented that this remained in the hands of the DCLG, however is being monitored by all within the Office.

Councillor K Ellis commented that at present all of the Council's within South-East Northumberland were looking at such agreements.

The Mayor, Cllr R Parker provided a further outline, acknowledging the aforementioned concerns but also stating how the arrangement once explained and budgeted for appropriately, represents the best deal for the people of Blyth.

The following amendments were proposed and seconded:

1. Councillor J R Potts proposed that code 1115 be split into two headings, with a new heading accounting for the £75,000 for the Community Organisations. This was **AGREED** by 5 votes to 3.
2. Councillor A Gibbs-Barton proposed that codes 1101 and 1106 be reinstated. This was **DEFEATED** by 3 votes to 5.
3. Councillor A Gibbs-Barton proposed that no provision be made for a Grants Officer. This was **AGREED** by 5 votes to 3.
4. Councillor J R Potts proposed that the amount from balances be increased to reduce the recommended precept to below £1M. This was **AGREED** nem con.

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With those amendments, the Committee **AGREED** to forward the proposed budget for decision at the Full Council.

### **049/14/06: ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND ITEMS FOR URGENT ATTENTION**

On the recommendation of the Town Clerk (Corporate Services), The Committee **AGREED** to recommend to the Council that, with effect from the date of the Council, any expenditure agreed by a Committee should include the budget code within the resolution from recording in the Minutes.

Councillor JR Potts enquired as to whether the Town Clerk's new the figure for the amount of Band D properties within Blyth. The Town Clerk (Corporate Services) replied that this figure was 8381.09.

### **050/14/07: DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

It was **AGREED** that the next meeting of the Finance Committee is to be held on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber at Arms Everytne House.

### **MEETING CLOSED AT 7.30pm.**

Confirmed as a true record

And signed by the Chair .....

Date.....

### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

#### **Councillors:**

K Ellis (Chair)  
J R Potts (Vice-Chair)  
B Elliott  
A Gibbs-Barton  
G T Knox  
K Nisbet

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R Parker (Mayor)

O Potts

J Reid

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