

HORWICH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance Review Sub Committee of Horwich Town Council held at Horwich Community Centre on Thursday 16 November 2023 commencing at 10.30 am.

PRESENT: Councillors: D. Grant (in the Chair), R. Bamforth, J. Scoble.
Town Clerk, C. Hutchinson.

TO APPOINT THE CHAIR OF THE FINANCE REVIEW SUB COMMITTEE FOR 2023 – 2024:

FR 85 Resolved to approve the continued appointment of Councillor Grant as Chair of the Finance Review Sub Committee for 2023 – 2024.

TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

FR 86 Apologies had been received from Councillors Rotheram and Williamson.

TO CONSIDER THE PROPOSALS AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2024 - 2025:

FR 87 All members had received a report accompanying the draft budget, based on advice from Bolton Council that the Council Tax Base for Horwich had not changed from the current year and had provided a table on this basis showing the impact of either maintaining the precept at the current level or increasing it as per draft budget proposals.

Members questioned the calculation for the CTB figure considering the amount of housebuilding taking place in Horwich. This had been already queried with Corporate Finance who had advised that the information used to calculate the tax base is extracted from the council tax billing system and includes exemption households. Although Members felt that this was a less than satisfactory explanation, it was noted and agreed that it would be carefully scrutinised prior to the next budget.

A proposed expenditure list had been prepared, based on resolutions already made by the council and this was distributed to all members who then added their recommendations:

- Sport, social and culture grants – reduced due to underspend in 2023 – 24.
- Civic recognition – increased to include costs of refurbishment of mayoral chain.
- Salaries, NI, PAYE and pension – noted overspend in current year due to long term sickness absence of a member of the caretaking staff and accompanying cover caretaking costs during this period. Increased for 2024 – 25 to reflect national pay award for all staff and possible additional staff.
- Training and accreditation – reduced due to underspend in current year

- Environmental Improvements includes additional winter gritting, spring/summer trough planting and Green Lane playing fields project
- Green Spaces Initiative increased to include acquisition of land for community use and takeover of management of allotments
- Regeneration including Christmas lighting – reduced for 2024 – 25 while noting that this had gone over budget for the current year due to acquisition of new and refurbished lights, however it was expected that future savings would be made to enable Council to add more displays
- Website and newsletter – reduced as new website created in current year with just hosting/maintenance costs in 2024 – 25, also less paper copies required for newsletter as it will be included on the website
- Horwich Community Centre building maintenance – increased as many repairs needed eg. pointing, work to address dampness in Saddlery
- Other expenditure including audit, payroll, licences, insurance – increased to reflect inflation, reduction in equipment as no major purchases planned for 2024 – 25
- Elections – reduced for 2024 – 25, current year was an election year, but provision still required in event of by-election
- Festival of Horwich – increase of £1,000 requested
- Other headings to remain the same

Following further discussion, it was resolved to approve the recommendations for the draft budget for 2024 – 25 with amendments as agreed, for consideration at the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 11 December 2023 and approval at the meeting of the Town Council on 25 January 2024.

The meeting closed at 11.05am.

Chair.....

Date.....