

## **LISKEARD TOWN COUNCIL**

**AT A MEETING** of the **FINANCE AND STRATEGY COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber at 7.30 pm on Tuesday 28 October 2014 there were present:

The Mayor Councillor Phil Seeva - in the Chair

The Deputy Mayor Councillor Jane Pascoe

Councillors: Rachel Brooks, Ian Goldsworthy, Adam Hodgkins, Lorna Shrubsole, James Shrubsole, and Hella Tovar

Town Clerk; Steve Vinson

Minute Clerk; Mr Stuart Houghton

Members of the Public - None

### **384/14 PUBLIC SPEAKER**

No members of the public were present.

### **385/14 APOLOGIES**

No apologies were necessary

### **386/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Brooks declared a non registerable interest in the Silver Band Grant Application

### **387/14 MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & STRATEGY COMMITTEE MEETING 23 SEPTEMBER 2014**

Councillor L. Shrubsole asked that “the Cattle Market” be added to the second list in item 319/14 (3).

Councillor Brooks proposed, Councillor Hodgkins seconded and the Committee **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Finance and Strategy Committee meeting held on the 23 September 2014 with the above addition. The Deputy Mayor signed the Minutes.

### **388/14 TOWN CLERK'S REPORT - FOR INFORMATION**

The Town Clerk's report item 4, as circulated, was discussed; the other items were included in the agenda.

At the previous meeting two grant applications had been made by letter. In accordance with the Committee's instructions application forms had been sent to them but they had not yet been returned.

**389/14 COUNCILS ROLE IN DELIVERING AND INFLUENCING LOCAL SERVICES**

The Town Clerk reported that he had received plans of Rapsons Skate Park, Car Park and Grassed Area, but not the other information, relating to costings, he had requested.

In response to a question of was the Council intending to purchase these amenities, Councillor Goldsworthy replied that the Council was doing "due diligence". It was attempting to find out potential operating and maintenance costs, and any potential grants from Cornwall Council, before considering what action to take. A further comment was made that if the areas were taken over our maintenance and operating costs might be less than those to be provided by Cornwall Council. The example of Dobwalls Council's grass cutting costs were 50% of those quoted by Cornwall Council. The need to treat costings provided by Cornwall Council with caution was expressed as the accuracy of some of their figures received was questionable.

The Town Clerk then reported that he had received an indication that Cornwall Council would transfer part of Westbourne House garden to the Town Council under the joint management agreement, but he had not yet received any indication of their costs for the agreement. As part of the agreement the Council could consider the additional pedestrian and vehicular access into the gardens.

A small Working Group had met to consider the use of the Public Hall and had received suggestions from Committee's.

The Town Clerk had informed the Town Forum of the Council's intention to co-ordinate and involve other groups in the devolution process and had requested the organisations present to inform their members of this. He had also met with the Sports association and offered them assistance with the Section 106 sports monies attached to the Addington agreement.

The Section 106 agreement for the area of the Peppers Park estate on which the developer had been made bankrupt; what had happened to the monies? It was reported that the Charter Way dentist had been built with this money. As a new Planning Application had been made for the completion of this site would a new section 106 agreement be made.

The Town Clerk and Deputy Mayor would be meeting with a representative of the Planning Department, tomorrow, and ask for his advice.

Members agreed that there was an urgent need for more sports pitches in the Town.

The Town Clerk stated that he and the Deputy Mayor had attended a meeting of the South East Cornwall Community Lead Local development Group which had been set up by Cornwall Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership for the local element delivery of the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund.

In response to a question relating to the need for the Council to take over the library

the Town Clerk said that the local Councils that had taken over their library services were in a different situation to ours. They did not own any buildings so had taken this opportunity to purchase their own building and also to raise revenue by letting space for the library and one stop shop.

Councillor Brooks said that a long list had been made at the last Committee meeting which could now be progressed. She suggested an open informal session, probably in December, where available information could be discussed and the way forward planned. It was suggested that the intentions could be announced in the next issue of the Town Crier,

The Town Clerk reported that he had attended meeting of CALC and also a Precept Training Course for New Clerks.

#### **390/14 BUDGET REPORT TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2014**

The budget reports had been circulated and noted.

Comment was made that although items had been removed from the Miscellaneous Line the budget had not been shared so they could not evaluate the information. Other comments were;

- The superannuation underspend was due to the old Town Clerk not joining the scheme, the new Clerk had
- It had been agreed the payment to the Forum would be made in two stages when the town council received the Precept payments from Cornwall council, this was not reflected in the budget presented
- It was suggested that the CCTV budget was showing an underspend as the BT bills were not received every quarter.

#### **391/14 MEETING ON FRIDAY 24 OCTOBER 2014**

The Town Clerk reported that an informal meeting of Councillors had been held to discuss financial matters and the new Precept.

A proposal for a new Grants Policy was discussed, a copy of Torpoint Council's policy had been obtained, it was agreed that this should form the basis of a policy to be agreed by the Finance and Strategy Committee.

The Town Clerk referred to the Precept Training he had received; he had asked for advice, amongst other thing, about the level of reserves that would be considered to be correct.

An "earmarked reserve" was monies set aside for a specific purpose whilst a "general reserve" was set aside with no defined purpose. This Council's reserves were all earmarked for a purpose.

He was informed that if a Council had a large amount of general reserves it should not increase its Precept. Levels of reserves held by other Councils ranged from 10% of its Precept up to twice its Precept. There was not a correct answer, but reserves should be backed by the reason for them, such as a costed maintenance programme.

In answer to a question, he replied that money from an earmarked reserve could be used for another purpose, in an emergency, but it would need to be replaced.

Other items discussed included;

- The current account did not receive any interest
- The one year bond interest rate was 0.95%
- The net Cornwall Council interest rate was 0.9% net, minimum deposit £25k
- It was not yet known how accessible the Cornwall Council account would be
- Cornwall Council had a credit rating of AA+
- Money could be transferred from the current account into the deposit account to earn interest
- If the Council took on more buildings as a part of devolved services our dilapidation reserve would have to increase

The Town Clerk was waiting for comments from Members who had attended this meeting.

#### **392/14            GRANTS**

Councillor Brooks left the meeting at 2037.

The Mayor introduced the application for a grant of £500 from the Liskeard Silver Band. The Band was a good ambassador for the Town and was encouraging young people to join. This application was to enable instruments, equipment and uniforms to be purchased for young and new members of the band.

The Mayor proposed, Councillor L. Shrubsole seconded and the Committee **RESOLVED** that a grant of £500 be made to the Liskeard Silver Band.

Councillor Brooks was invited to return to the meeting at 2040

Members discussed advertising the availability of the Council's grants and the possibility of awarding grants every three to six months. Comment was made that the same applicants were applying for grants from both the Town Council and the Forum, but the Forum had a different policy to the Council.

The disposal of display cabinets from the Museum was discussed. These cabinets had been proved by a grant but had now become redundant as they did not comply with modern requirements. The cabinets had been bespoke for the Museum. The Council had resolved that they should be disposed of at a local auction. The local cricket league had made an offer to purchase the cabinets for £300. If this offer was accepted it would save on auction, transport and handling costs.

Members could not put a value on the cabinets to consider the offer from the cricket league, and that the cabinets should be valued.

Councillor Goldsworthy proposed, The Deputy Mayor seconded and the Committee **RESOLVED** that an auction was possibly not the best way to dispose of the cabinets. A local valuer should advise the Council on the worth of the cabinets, before the final decision was made.

#### **393/14 PRECEPT 2014 - 2015**

The Town Clerk reported that Committee were preparing their thoughts for the next years precept which included a three year programme. The initial timing for the Precept was to present it to the Finance Committee on the 25 November 2014, the full Council on the 16 December 2014 as Cornwall Council had indicated they wanted the figures by 23 December 2014, but an extension of time until February 2015 could be applied for.

In response to a question and capping he replied that the Government already had the right to intervene if the local Precept was of a similar amount to the District Council's. Under the Localism Bill there was a cap of 1.9% but it was thought that this would not be applied as it could delay Localism.

Options for this year included

- A minimum increase with no cuts
- A moderate increase

It was suggested that the major items to be included this year would be schemes that could generate income, such as solar panels. Whatever decision was made it would have to be justifiable to the public.

#### **394/14 CORRESPONDENCE**

None

**395/14 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

None

**396/14 PART II. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

None.

**397/14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Finance and Strategy Committee meeting would be at 7.30 pm on 25 November 2014.

#### **4. Clerks Report – 28<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

Grants The prospective applicants Penhaligon's Friends and Vitalise have been contacted and advised as to the Committee's requirements. Applications made on the appropriate form will be submitted to Committee if any are received.

#### **5. Council's role in delivering and influencing local services**

Following discussion at the last Finance and Strategy meeting the following has occurred:

##### **Town Council related items**

Rapsons skate park, car park and grassed area – Cornwall Council has been contacted, the Town Council's interest in a longer lease has been explained. This would assist us in obtaining grant aid should future upgrades of the site be carried out for which grant is applicable. Cornwall Council senior officer has indicated that this long lease would also be of assistance to Cornwall Council.

Requests were made for information that would assist us in considering suggestions from the Committee that we look at acquiring the grassed area at Rapsons adjacent to the Multi Use Games Area. In addition, plans and costing were asked for regarding the car park at Rapsons. In this way the Town Council might consider a multi-phased approach for that area. This could be implemented over a three or four year period should the costings and the Town Council's overall financial situation prove appropriate.

Plans have been secured for these sites and options from the Property Services team at Cornwall Council. We are awaiting feedback on costing from the relevant Cornwall Council budget holders and the operations view from the car park team.

Westborne Gardens – At an earlier meeting the Council had indicated that it was interested in acquiring Westborne Gardens from Cornwall Council subject to investigating whether the lawned area adjacent to Westborne could also be acquired to enable the Westborne Gardens site to be used more effectively for events etc. The Cornwall Council Liskeard/ Looe Community Network Manager has indicated informally that Cornwall Council is likely to agree to the inclusion of the lawned area with the Westborne Gardens site as a whole.

Public Hall Working Group – has been set up to look at various suggestions relating to the use of the Public Hall including those put forward by Finance and Strategy Committee and others ideas as so far received.

### **Town Clerk contact with other organisations based in the town**

Liskeard Town Forum – The Forum has been appraised of the Town Council's willingness to coordinate responses from local groups and organisations that might be interested in the Cornwall Council Devolution and Localism proposals. There was immediate interest expressed by the Liskerret Centre representative. Representatives of other groups on the Forum were asked to report back the offer to their respective organisations. Since the meeting South East Cornwall Tourism Association (S.E.C.T.A.) have been in contact regarding the impact of proposals on the tourism industry.

Sports Association – contact has been made by the Sports Association regarding any help that the Town Council might offer with the Section 106 “sports facilities” money attached to the Addington residential development.

### **Town Clerk contact with wider area link up opportunities**

South East Cornwall Community Lead Local Development Group – Cornwall Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership has set up four such groups. They are intended to be the local element of the delivery of European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund grant. It will cover the period 2014-2020. In consultation with other Liskeard

based organisations we have been seeking to increase the amount of people with a good knowledge of Liskeard on the Local Development Group and ideally the Board as well once it has been formed.

**Items Scheduled** Several finance and strategy related items have been scheduled that occur after the preparation of the Committee agenda and before the Committee itself. They are outlined below and the Clerk will verbally update at the Committee meeting if additional useful information is obtained. These are:

C.A.L.C. – Cornwall Council Meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> October Clerks meeting with Julian German the Economy portfolio holder to receive updates and consider issues such as Cornwall Council budget setting and devolution. There will also be in attendance a former Chair of NALC to give a perspective of how Town and Parish Councils nationally have found taking over items devolved from larger Councils in particular with regard to budgeting and capability.

Finance and Strategy – Finance Questions and Answers Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> October This might inform the development of a new Grants Policy for the Council which could be a task for this Committee.

C.A.L.C. – Budget and Precept Setting Training New Clerks 24<sup>th</sup> October This two hour course has been organised by C.A.L.C. to cover the latest information on these issues.

7 Financial Matters – Information Meeting on Grants Policy and Financial Matters held 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

Following questions raised at the last Finance and Strategy Committee and at other points a meeting has been organised for the 24<sup>th</sup> October. It will go through the specific grants policy and procedure currently used by the Council. There will be the opportunity to informally discuss and modify the policy and procedure if found appropriate. The meeting will also consider the requests for financial information relating to the Council's overall budget context that will help inform the budget setting and precept discussions for 2015/2016.