

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING – 2018/11/19 – 03

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING held in the Council Chamber, Claremont House, Lydney on Monday 19 November 2018 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT: Cllrs B Pearman (Chairman), B Berryman, D Biddle, C Harris, R Holmes, H Ives and A Preest

Mrs J Smailes – Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/RFO

Miss C Wheeler – Executive Officer (EO)

Cllr Pearman informed all present that no practice fire evacuation had been scheduled for the duration of the meeting. All attendees were then informed of the locations of the nearest fire exits.

1. **APOLOGIES**

No apologies for absence were received.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

It was noted that the CEO had previously obtained a dispensation from the Principal Authority in order that Members may discuss the Precept/Trust business and most recently had issued a dispensation herself in respect to all Members in order that the potential for Members allowances and expenses to be paid as of May 2019 could be deliberated.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Members noted that the minutes of the last meeting were duly approved/authorised at the end of the last Finance & Scrutiny Meeting.

4. **OPEN FORUM**

No requests to speak were received.

5. **FINANCIAL**

Councillor Allowances and Expenses

Members were advised that the purpose of the agenda item was not to debate whether the Council was in favour of Members claiming allowances/expenses as the Council's previous Resolution in respect to the payment of expenses had not, as yet, been "called in" by at least five Members. It was noted that discussion on the provision or payment of allowances and expenses from May 2019 would be an agenda item for the December Full Council meeting.

Members were however advised that it would be financially prudent for the Committee to consider the financial "risk" to the Council's Budget and determine if it wished to make financial provision in its draft 2019/2020 Budget in the event that Members so resolved at the December Full Council meeting to claim allowances and expenses from May 2019.

Cllr Ives spoke strongly against the practice of Members claiming either and he questioned what would happen if the Committee did not make financial provision for such but Full Council resolved that it would pay either one or the both to its Members from May 2019. The CEO advised Members that such would result in the Council depleting its "free" General Reserves. Members were asked if they wished to include in the draft budget an indicative figure of £500.00 per Member (resulting in a total of £7,500.00 to cover 15

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Members), such could be removed from the draft budget if Council did not resolve to pay its Members allowances.

During discussion the CEO advised that clarification would be given to all Members at the December Full Council meeting on the procedure which would need to be observed if the Council resolved to pay Member allowances. Whilst Cllr Holmes felt that Members would not necessarily claim expenses, he felt that some Members may not be able to take time off work to participate in in-house audits due to financial constraints and whilst Cllr Holmes stated that he would not personally claim allowances, he felt that the Council should include an allowance sum and a notional amount of £1,000.00 in its draft budget for expenses. Members were advised that if Full Council resolved to pay its Members allowances, the allowance sum payable to each Member would not be determined by Lydney Town Council, but by an Independent Review Panel (approximate charge for Panel £500.00) and the allowance rate for each Member further determined on a scale of duties/responsibilities; all Parish and Town Councils in the District who so resolved to pay its Members an allowance would use this same scale. Cllrs Biddle and Berryman felt that Members should be permitted to claim expenses only to cover mileage costs if the current motion not to claim such was rescinded.

After a short further discussion it was **proposed by Cllr Harris, seconded by Cllr Ives**, that that the Council would include a sum of £7,500.00 in its draft budget for 2019/2020 in respect of Member allowances; that the sum would subsequently be removed from the draft budget for 2019/2020 if, at the December 2018 Full Council meeting, Members did not resolve to pay its Members an allowance from May 2019. With regard to the inclusion of Members expenses in the 2019/2020 Budget, £1,000 would be included under a separate Budget header. Unanimous.

It was noted that if, at the December Full Council meeting, it was resolved not to include a sum toward Members claiming allowances/expenses and this was later rescinded following the election of Members who felt allowances/expenses should be paid, then such would have to be taken from “free” General Reserves. Noted.

Draft Committee Budget for 2019/2020

Members were provided with a copy of the draft Committee Budget for 2019-2020 for their consideration.

After taking an opportunity to peruse the draft budget it was **proposed by Cllr Ives, seconded by Cllr Berryman**, that the Committee would approve the following budget for 2019/2020:-

Finance & Scrutiny Committee Budget	- £84,215.00
Election Fees	- £10,000.00
- Members allowances	- £7,500.00 (plus £500 Independent Review Panel Charge)
- Members expenses	- £1,000.00
Contingency	- £5,850.00

Unanimous.



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6. **MEETING DATES**

Members noted that an Extra Ordinary meeting would be convened by the Chairman (date to be advised) once the tax base figure had been received in order that the Committee may consider/approve the Full Council Budget and consider the Precept Recommendation that is derived therefrom which will be considered by Full Council. The next ordinary meeting of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee would take place on 18 February 2019 (Grant Applications).

7. **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

Minutes of today's meeting duly approved and Chairman, Cllr Pearman, signed minutes as a true record.

Meeting closed at 7.27 pm.

Chairman 

Date 19/11/18