

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF HERTFORD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD IN THE ROBIN ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD ON
MONDAY, 6 JANUARY 2014

Present:

The Deputy Mayor of Hertford
Councillor R Willis

Councillors

P Boyle, Miss C Geall, Mrs B Haddock, Mrs B Mansfield, M McCormick, Mrs S Newton Dr
L Radford, P Ruffles, Miss J Sartin, Miss I Sigmatic, A Stevenson, R Willis and N Wilson

Officers

Town Clerk – Ms N L Villa
Civic Administration Manager – Ms P Carpenter
Finance Manager – Mr S Davies
1 member of the public

Note: In the absence of the Mayor, The Deputy Mayor Cllr Willis took the Chair.

Prayers – The Mayor’s Chaplain, The Rev’d Alan Stewart led the Council in the opening prayers, which included a minute’s silence in remembrance of former Mayor, Joan Coleman, who had recently died.

339. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

340. MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor provided the Committee with a list of the recent events she had attended in December.

341. THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

Subject to the spelling correction of Chaplain (Chaplin) the minutes of the Full Town Council meeting held on 28 October 2013 be approved as a correct record and the Deputy Mayor be authorised to sign the same.

342. QUESTIONS AND/OR STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None.

343. COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Councillor N Wilson moved the report of the Community Services Committee meeting held on 25 November 2013.

Community Gardening

It was requested that, in view of the success of Ware in Bloom, further attempts at implementing a Community Gardening Scheme at Bluecoats be actioned.

Min 282 – Mudlarks Community Garden

It was confirmed that planning permission would be required to make alterations to the Mudlarks shed, and that Mudlarks would be responsible for seeking the permission.

Min 285 – Allotment Fees

A query was raised as to the reason for only increasing the allotment rent by 10p. The Chairman confirmed that this was as a result of discussion at the meeting where it was considered that, whilst important to maintain the annual

increases, it was felt that a modest rise, given previously higher increases, would be more acceptable to plottolders, thus ensuring that the allotments would continue to be full utilised.

Min 289 – Draft Budget

Cllr McCormick expressed disappointment that certain budget items for the Community Services Committee had been altered by the Finance, Personnel and Administration Committee. In particular he was disappointed to note that the new Cemetery land reserve had been deleted.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The report of the Community Services Committee held on 25 November 2013 be received.

344. DEVELOPMENT AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Councillor Miss Isabel Sigmac moved the report of the Development and Leisure Committee meeting held on 9 December 2013 (including the relevant reports of the Planning Sub-Committee meetings of 30 September, 14 October, 28 October, 11 November and 25 November 2013)

Minute 305 – Tourist Information Centre

It was confirmed that the future of the Tourist Information Centre was currently undergoing a strategic review. The TIC lease was due for renewal in 2016, not 2015 as minuted.

Minute 306 – Christmas Lights

The Council had been pleased to note that the Christmas lights display had been well received by the public.

Minute 312 – Website

Discussions have taken place with various companies regarding a specification for the new website. A further meeting will be held to determine which company will be used.

Minute 311 – Planning Minutes

It was confirmed that the Post Box at St Andrew Street was complete except that tape was still covering the slot to prevent letters being posted.

Minute 316 – Draft Budget 2014/15

It was confirmed that £5000 had been set aside for Castle Basement Displays and £5000 for the refurbishment of the kitchen on the ground floor.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The report of the Development and Leisure Committee meeting held on 9 December 2013 (including the relevant reports of the Planning Sub-Committee meetings of 30 September, 14 October, 28 October, 11 November and 25 November 2013) be received.

345. FINANCE, POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

Councillor Miss C Geall moved the report of the meeting of the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee held on 16 December 2013 (including the report of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 11 November 2013)

Minute 329 – Review of Leases and Contracts

The Chairman confirmed that the review of leases and contracts had been a useful exercise and would be presented to Committee annually.

Minute 326 – Draft Budget 2014/15

A query was raised regarding the budget for Memorial Repairs which was showing £11005, as opposed to £5000. The Finance Manager agreed to investigate the matter.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The report of the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee meeting held on 16 December 2013 (including the report of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 11 November 2013) be noted.

346. PRECEPT 2014/15

Cllr Miss Geall presented the proposed Precept for 2014/15 and confirmed that the Committees had worked hard to ensure a 0% precept increase and maintain adequate reserves, whilst continuing to ensure adequate funds were available for the Council's commitments, which included work to the War Memorial and support to the Museum. The prudent use of the Council tax support grant, by drip feeding the grant into the budget over a number of years had proved to be a sensible way forward and the Council wished to express its gratitude to the Finance Manager for his recommendation in this matter.

Funds from the New Homes Bonus had been set aside for Taxi Marshalling and improved town centre notice boards, and further money will be used for new initiatives, which could include the enhancement of Maidenhead Street.

Cllr McCormick expressed his concern regarding the increasing staff costs in the budget and requested that a Working Party be set up to examine the budget line by line to see where savings could be made. Cllr Miss Geall stated that the budget had been scrutinised closely by the Committees and that the Personnel Sub Committee had also spent time reviewing the staff salaries for the next financial year. Furthermore, each Committee would also be requested to review its own staffing requirements during the next Committee cycle. Cllr Geall also confirmed that the increased staff costs had largely been caused by the increase in Employer contributions.

The proposal to set up a Working Party was not supported by the Council.

It was RESOLVED that:

- a) The Council approves a precept demand of £1,025,845 for 2014/15 which represents a 0% increase in the budget for a Band D household.
Note: Cllr McCormick wished it to be recorded that he abstained from the vote on the resolution.
- b) The Council authorised the Mayor, two other Councillors (to include the Chairman of Finance, Policy and Administration Committee) and the Town Clerk to sign the formal precept demand.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 20.25.