

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF HERTFORD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD IN THE ROBIN ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD ON
MONDAY, 28 JANUARY 2013**

Present:

The Worshipful the Mayor of Hertford
Councillor Miss J Sartin

Councillors

P Boyle, Miss C Geall, Mrs B Mansfield,
P Moore, D Poole, Dr L E Radford, P Ruffles,
Miss I Sigmac, Dr Stevenson, R Willis and N Wilson

Officers

Town Clerk – Ms N L Villa
Civic Administration Manager – Ms T Carpenter
Finance Manager – Mr S Davies

In attendance

3 Members of the public

Prayers – The Rev'd. Barbara Routley, (Mayor's Chaplain) led the Council in the opening prayers which included a minute's silence to remember Mr Des O'Connor, a former Mayor of Hertford who had recently passed away.

331. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

332. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor advised the Council of some of the many engagements and Christmas events she had attended recently and took the opportunity to thank the Deputy Mayor for deputising for her on occasions. The Mayor also thanked Councillors for their support at the recent Civic Service and the Rev'd Barbara Routley for the invitation.

Councillors attention was drawn to the Mayor's blog, (mayorofhertford.com), which was providing a valuable archive of material of the current mayoral year and a showcase of Hertford as a vibrant town.

333. THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the Full Town Council meeting held on 29 October 2012 be approved as a correct record and the Mayor be authorised to sign the same.

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

None.

335. COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, Councillor Peter Ruffles moved the report of the Community Services Committee meeting held on 12 November 2012 and the Youth Town Council meeting of 29 November 2012.

Min. 252 – Land at Sele Road

The Vice Chairman highlighted the impressive progress at the Community Allotment project at Sele Road and suggested that all members visited the site to view the transformation that had taken place.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The report of the Community Services Committee held on 12 November 2012 and the Youth Town Council meeting of 29 November 2012 be received.

336. DEVELOPMENT AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Councillor Miss Isabel Sigmac moved the report of the Development and Leisure Committee meeting held on 26 November 2012 (including the relevant reports of the Planning Sub-Committee meetings of 3 September, 17 September, 1 October, 15 October and 29 October)

Min 280 – Venue Hire Report

The increase in bookings of the Millbridge Rooms was noted and it was hoped that this success could be mirrored in the bookings for the Downshire Suite, with the appointment of the new Marketing and Events Manager.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The report of the Development and Leisure Committee meeting held on 26 November 2012 (including the relevant reports of the Planning Sub-Committee meetings of 3 September, 17 September, 1 October, 15 October 2012) be received.

337. FINANCE, POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

Councillor Miss Chantal Geall moved the report of the meeting of the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee held on 21 January 2013 and the report of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 10 December 2012.

Min 319 Community Grant Applications

The Chairman advised the Council that there remained £4000 within the Community Grant budget for 2012/13, with a further opportunity for applications to be considered at the next meeting of the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee on 25 March 2013. Councillors were asked to highlight this to any local charities that may be in need of some financial assistance.

Correspondence had been received from the Hertford Football Club expressing their gratitude for the recent grant support and for the support and interest the Council had taken in the Club during its efforts to attract larger attendances at matches.

Min 321(d) Budget 2013/14

The Chairman advised the Council of the discussions on this item at the last meeting of the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee. The budget setting process had proved challenging this year due to the recent rule change regarding the way in which the Council Tax base was calculated. In previous years Council Tax was levied to all households in the town, however, following Government changes, the number of households included had been reduced further to exclude households in receipt of Council Tax support. This had led to a tax base reduction of about 800 Band D households. If the Precept were maintained at the current level, the reduction in the tax base would cause the tax paid on a band D property to rise by 7.3%.

Taking a compromise position the Finance Policy & Administration Committee had recommended a maximum increase in the band D tax of 5% which represented an actual reduction in the Precept of approximately £22,000.

To mitigate the effect of the change in the calculation of the tax base Central Government was likely to issue a one-off grant to town and parish councils to introduce the increase over several years. At this stage the actual grant likely to be received by Hertford Town Council had not been confirmed. The Committee also proposed to utilise funds from the New Homes Bonus reserve to fund several of the optional projects within the budget.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The report of the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee meeting held on 21 January 2013 (including the report of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 10 December 2012) be noted

338. PRECEPT

Whilst noting that a 5% increase in the precept amounted to just a £5 per annum increase to a Band D Council Tax, nevertheless the Council was concerned at the prospect, and felt that any increase in the precept would be difficult for the public to accept. The Council recognised that it faced a balancing act between setting a prudent budget for the Council, whilst providing a good deal for households, and therefore considered that a 3% increase would be more appropriate. (£2.75 per Band D household per annum) This would mean setting a precept of £1,017,498, representing a decrease in the Council budget of £42,000 on the previous year.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Council approve a precept demand of £1,017,498 for 2013/14.
Note: Cllr Boyle wished it to be recorded that he voted against 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 8.05pm.