

**Thorpe St Andrew Town Council  
Minutes of the Finance and Staff Committee Meeting  
held on 22 October 2018 at 7.30pm**

**1 Present:**

Mr I Mackie (Chairman)

Mr F Bowe    Mr J Emsell    Miss S Lawn    Mr S Snelling    Mr J Ward

**Apologies:** Mr L Reeves

**In attendance:**

Dr T Foreman (Town Clerk)

Mrs J Fenn (Deputy Clerk)

Mr D Sayer (Parks and Estates Manager)

Mrs D Matthews (Committee Officer)

Mr J Fisher and 1 member of the public was present.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

None

**3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2018 were agreed and signed as a true record.

**4 PUBLIC SESSION (limited to 3 minutes per speaker)**

A resident addressed the Committee regarding his proposal to offer free training for local residents of Thorpe St Andrew in the use of the new NDR. There had been a number of accidents and near misses on the new NDR, in particular the roundabouts, due to a number of factors and he wanted to try to raise awareness of how to use the roundabouts more safely and to build confidence. He sought the Town Council's views on the proposal and, if minded to support it, could a room be made available for the training and help given to promoting the sessions.

**5 FINANCE**

Members considered the papers circulated with the agenda and the Deputy Clerk outlined the latest position. In response to questions regarding potential underspends, she emphasised that the current figures related to the first 6 months of the year and that many of the underspends shown would be spent over the following 6 months. Whilst the provision for election expenses was unlikely to be needed this year, a larger sum would be needed for elections in 2019. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that there was currently approximately £248,742 held in reserves which had been built up over time in response to a recommendation from the Auditor. .

- (i) Summary of Receipts and Payments – members received and approved the summary of receipts and payments.
- (ii) Variance Report - 1/4/2018 to 30/9/2018 – members noted the current figures.
- (iii) Summary of Capital Spend – members received and approved the summary of capital spending.

- (iv) Summary of Events - members received and approved the financial summary in relation to events.

## 6 BUDGET 2019/20

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk setting out the proposed budget for 2019/20 prior to consideration by the Town Council in November. The Chairman of the Committee reminded members that the Council had previously agreed a 10% increase in the budget over a 2-year period to deliver ongoing projects, with a view to a zero increase in the budget for 2019/20. Having regard to areas of increased expenditure on the human resource package, River Green, higher electrical costs, the Youth Council, football marking and increase in staffing, the report included a 3.7% increase to cover these costs. The estimated rate on a Band D property would still be significantly less than other current comparator precepts in Broadland. The Chairman invited members to consider a zero increase with any shortfall being met from reserves. Some members commented that it might be more prudent to incorporate a small increase rather than use reserves or at least incorporate an increase for inflation.

Members commented that the service provided by the Town Council continued to offer extremely good value for money and that they needed to ensure this message was communicated. With regard to any percentage increases, the comment was made that the increases being considered were relatively small when viewed in terms of the actual increase in monetary terms for example a 1.75% increase equated approximately to an increase of £1.50 for a band D property.

The Deputy Clerk commented that the draft budget in the report had been prepared based on no increase to most budget heads but an overall increase of 3.7% to cover the additional expenditure detailed above. An alternative option would be to look for savings in some current budget headings for example: a reduction from £10k to £5k for buildings maintenance, a reduction in the capital budget buildings/amenities from £17.5k to £15K and a reduction in insurance costs for the Town Hall following a renegotiation saving £1k. Reserves could then be used to cover any remaining shortfall, which was estimated at approximately £8k. There was potential that this could be funded by underspends across the whole budget.

It was then proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED** to ask the Deputy Clerk to prepare a budget proposal for 2019/20 consideration by the Town Council based on a zero increase, with savings being identified as outlined above to help meet the additional costs.

## 7 STAFF CLOCKING IN MACHINES

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk setting out a proposal to introduce staff clocking in machines. The Clerk explained the reasons for the proposal. The automated system would be more flexible, less time consuming to manage and would provide valuable data on holidays/sickness/TOIL and provide confirmation that lone workers had safely finished for the day. Staff had been consulted and were supportive of the proposal. Some members welcomed the proposals and the flexibility it offered whilst others were concerned that the system was not necessary for the small number of staff involved and would prefer to continue with the present system based on trust. Members were reminded that staff were supportive of the proposal and that there was

no issue regarding trust but instead the main reason was to reduce the manual burden of time recording and provide valuable data and reassurance for lone workers. On being put to the vote, with 3 members voting for, 2 against and 1 abstention, it was

**RESOLVED** to support the introduction of time recording machines at a cost not to exceed £500 plus VAT.

### 8 VEHICLE TRACKERS

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk setting out proposals for the supply and installation of electronic GPS data logging trackers on all council vehicles. The Parks and Estates Manager outlined the reasons for the use of vehicle trackers, including the ability to locate and contact the increasing number of staff situated at mobile locations, protection of the Council's assets (vehicles) and to provide evidence in the event of complaints/queries about driving or services provided. Staff were supportive of the proposal. Having considered these matters, some members supported the proposal feeling it would help encourage good practice, provide essential evidence if needed, help make contact with staff easier and enable the Council to respond to work demands more effectively. Other members were not wholly convinced the small numbers of staff/vehicles involved warranted such an investment at the current time having regard to the costs of the proposal. It was suggested that an alternative would be to fit trackers as part of the insurance renewal of the vehicles with a view to covering the cost from savings in the premium and the Town Clerk commented that, having regard to the overall savings recently negotiated with the Council's insurers, this was unlikely to yield any further savings. On being put to the vote, with 2 members voting for, 4 against, the proposal to support the installation of trackers was lost and it was

**RESOLVED** to not proceed with the purchase and installation of trackers at the current time.

### 9 SIR GEORGE MORSE PARK – CAFÉ QUOTATIONS

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk setting out quotations for the cost of conversion of the former football store at the Sir George Morse Pavilion to a café. Potential funding sources for the project included utilising the commuted sum received for the transfer of the River Green toilet block with a view to the income received from the rental of the café being used to repay this sum, approximately £5k from the River Green budget and the rest being funded from reserves. The sum could potentially be repaid within 3-4 years. A question was raised about the viability of running a café from the premises and it was noted that discussions had been held with the current user about the likely rental charges. The premises would be let to them via a commercial lease and options were available to adjust the rent over the period of the lease. Members welcomed the proposals and commented that there had been very positive public feedback about the trial operation of the café.

**RESOLVED** to recommend the Town Council to support the proposal for conversion of the store into a café and that the preferred contractor be contractor A at a cost of £35,875 plus VAT.

**10 RIVER GREEN TOILET BLOCK CONVERSION**

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk setting out proposals for the conversion of the former ladies toilet facility at River Green to provide office/storage space with toilet and kitchen facilities.

**RESOLVED** to support the proposal for conversion of the ladies toilet facility at River Green and that the preferred contractor be contractor B at a cost of £4,500 plus VAT.

**11 PROPOSAL FOR NDR DRIVER EDUCATION**

Members considered correspondence from a driving instructor and resident of Thorpe St Andrew who was proposing to run a free group training session for Thorpe St Andrew residents struggling to negotiate the roundabouts on the new NDR. Members acknowledged the issue of the number of accidents and near misses occurring on the NDR, particularly at the roundabouts, and welcomed the opportunity to offer training and support to residents who were struggling with using the new road. They were happy to provide a room for the training and offer tea and biscuits for attendees. They also agreed to help with promoting the training using notice boards, social media, local press and radio coverage.

**RESOLVED** to support the proposal to offer training and to provide a room for the training together with tea and biscuits for attendees (at a time to be agreed between the trainer and the Town Clerk having regard to availability of the trainer and the room) and to help publicise the training.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Payments to Charities – contribution to the Loneliness Luncheon Club.

*The meeting closed at 9:45pm.*

*Signed:* .....

*Dated:* .....