**Finance and Asset Management Committee**

**Tuesday 16th January 2024**

**Council Chamber**

**Coleford Town Council Offices**

**6.30 pm - 8.30 pm**

**Minutes**

**Present: Cllrs N Penny, M Cox, C Elsmore, P Kay, P Kyne**

Laura-Jade Schroeder – Town Clerk

Laura Jayne minute taking

1. **To note apologies**

None received.

1. **To declare interests re: items on the agenda**

A personal interest was shown by Cllrs P Kay, S Cox, M Cox and N Penny, relating to Twinning, under item 14. Draft budget.

Cllr N Penny expressed a pecuniary interest, relating to Events, also under item 14.

1. **To allow dispensations requests**

No new dispensations were received.

1. **To approve the minutes of 12 December 2023**

Cllr C Elsmore proposed the minutes of 12 December to be a true and accurate account.

Cllr P Kay seconded, unanimously agreed.

A copy of the minutes were signed by the Chair.

1. **To raise matters arising from the Minutes of 12 December 2023**

Page 1, Item 6: The Town Clerk updated Members on having located the landowner of the dangerous Angel Vale trees. The landowner was more than happy to cooperate and CTC tree contractor has since met with the landowners’ contractor, to discuss which trees need attention. Nathan Choat (GCC Highways) was a part of that meeting and informed us that CTC own a number of trees, along Rock Lane which will need to be dealt with as part of a wider exercise.

For Angel Vale residents to be updated.

Office to receive Parish online training from Cllr M Cox, to help with Asset register.

1. **To take comments from the Public Forum**

No public were present.

1. **To make recommendation regarding the budget for 2024/25**

Cllr N penny read aloud a statement email, from Sian Roxborough, FoDDC Monitoring Officer, regarding budget setting and council tax arrears.

All Members noted this.

The Town Clerk explained several amendments and calculations that had been worked on, relating to the budget.

Clock Tower: with regards to Coleford Clock Tower budget, although CTC have a schedule of works and costings, from DHVA, we have not yet committed to any of these works and will not do so until;

1. a public consultation has been held, to enquire from Coleford parishioners whether they agree with what we would like to do to the Clock Tower, if they agree with how we would like to fund it, and to find out what their most preferred way to move forward is.
2. there is a finer funding strategy in place that looks at all funding options. We will not commit to any works until this is in place.

We are aware that Coleford Clock Tower is a Listed building, and therefore we have a statutory obligation to maintain it to a certain standard.

For a budget themed newsletter to go out, including the main lines of what the budget is going to be spent on, including our aspirations to invest on improvements to the Clock Tower.

To ask Oliver from DHVA, to put together a minimum position, finding out what the priority is and how can we break that down.

There could be the potential to ask for more from the Precept, but this would only be a few thousand, at most.

Cllr M Cox added that FoDDC has been awarded £50,000 to look at conservation areas and how they can be used in a historic manner.

Another element to investigate could potentially be crowd funding.

Cllr N Penny suggested that the best route may be to apply for a public works loan after completing a public consultation.

If we do all the works proposed, the minimum required through external funding, is £300,000.

CTC budget just balances, based on precept assumptions, allowing 9 months of working capital.

The Chair continued onto item 8. which helped inform item 7.

Returned to item 7 at 19:26.

Based on a £505,000.00 precept, our income is predicted to be £840,905.00, including external funding and expenditure at £1,083,892.00.

**Recommendation: The 2024/25 budget was proposed as Income of £840,905.00 (including external funding) and Expenditure of £1,083,892.00.**

Cllr P Kyne proposed, M Beard seconded, unanimously agreed.

When the budget goes out, it is as a recommendation, any change to that from Councillors, must be presented as a balanced budget, with explanation on how to fund.

1. **To make recommendation regarding the precept for 2024/25**

£505,000.00 with the new taxbase equates to a 6.46% which is in line with inflation.

We were at less of an increase last year, everyone was 10, 11%, we were 3%.

Locality grant, there may be a grant for revising NDP, up to 10k

Grant funding to be explored as NDP progresses.

**Recommendation: Cllr P Kay proposed that the requested precept for 2024/25 be £505,000.00.**

M Cox seconded, unanimously agreed

The above equates to an increase of 19pence per week, which we will explain in the newsletter.

1. **To make recommendation regarding the office move**

Cllr N Penny provided an update.

CTC working group and legal representatives have had sight of latest updates to the lease and have reported back.

A number of questions have gone back to landlord, now awaiting answers, but no major issues have arisen.

CTC working group, will continue to work on this, before addressing to Council.

Cllr N Penny met on site with Steve Symonds of building control, and based on the most recent plans from UWE, Steve has no concerns or reasons for delay to the building regulations application, subject to receiving architect drawings.

The building regulations application will be roughly £400.00.

Cllr N Penny has since engaged with an architect that has the capacity to turn plans around in a relatively short time scale, no fee proposal has been received as yet.

To ask the Town Clerk to use delegated authority to determine that fee.

It is noted that we can’t start works without the architectural plans.

Members were also updated that Cllr N Penny and the Town Clerk, invited 14/15 contractors, to a ‘meet the client’ session, where 10 contractors turned up, with others still showing interest, just unavailable on the day. All were interested in elements of the scheme, and understood that we will be spending on items bit by bit, and all have capacity to take on what they would commit to, ready to move in by the 1st of April.

There is the potential to move admin staff and the chamber into the building before the rest is finished. There is currently no time pressure for the TIC to move.

All contractors are happy to work as a team.

**Recommendation: for the Council to continue to use the Town Clerk’s delegated authority to progress works.**

Unanimously agreed.

1. **To clarify Great Oaks Hospice grant funding usage, and make recommendations.**

Cllr N Penny summarised the request received from Great Oaks, to amend part of the usage of the awarded Community Grant, to cover transport costs.

No extra funding was requested.

All Members happy and thanked Great Oaks for their consideration.

1. **To consider printer quotes, and make recommendations, as necessary.**

The Town Clerk informed Members that the current 3 year photocopier contract, owned and managed by MCL, was coming to an end.

Quotes were obtained from MCL for a renewal of contract, including the moving of our current device to the new CTC premises.

A second quote was also received, for the same thing, however this quote was £1000.00 higher and would mean having to receive a new photocopier from a supplier we have not yet worked with, for a longer lease of 5 years.

**Recommendation: to stick with existing contract supplier, MCL, for the move and 3-year contract.**

Cllr P Kay proposed, Cllr P Kyne seconded, unanimously agreed.

1. **To consider quotes received re: Old Station Way Trees, and make recommendations as necessary**

An update was provided on the quotes received from 2 contractors, for works to be carried out on the trees, along Old Station Way. A third contractor was contacted but they did not provide a quote.

It was noted that this cost should come from the Environment budget.

CTC has previously worked with both contractors and confirmed that there has been no issue with the safety or quality of both companies work.

One provided a higher quote, as this included additional works of felling one of the trees (Tree 15).

Councillors discussed the two quotes, and it was proposed and unanimously agreed:

**Recommendation: To go with the cheaper option, subject to the cost of asking them to fell tree 15, not being higher than** **the other contractor had quoted for the felling of tree 15.**

1. **To consider waste bin replacement at Bells Field, and make recommendations as necessary.**

The Town Clerk gave a summary as to why we are requesting new bins on Bells Field

It was discussed and agreed to:

**Recommendation: To defer this item to a later date, once asset register is more substantial.**

Unanimously agreed.

Cllr M Beard proposed for the meeting to go ‘Into committee’.

Cllr P Kay seconded, unanimously agreed at 20:09

1. **To consider any relevant Staffing, and related, Matters, and to make any recommendations, as necessary (‘In Committee’):**
   1. **Staff Appraisal, amended job description, inc. Sign off of Probationary Period**

Councillors noted the Town Clerk’s appraisal, and congratulated her with thanks for all the hard work that she and the team had done since being in post, and for the seamless transition between Town Clerks. It was proposed and unanimously agreed:

**Recommendation: To conclude the Town Clerk’s probationary period and sign off as complete, with congratulations and thanks.**

The Town Clerk’s job description was proposed, noting the amendment that had been made in conjunction with the Town Clerk during her appraisal. It was unanimously agreed:

**Recommendation: To accept the version of the Town Clerk & RFO job description that had been circulated, and add version 1 to the footer.**

**Meeting end: 20:20pm**