

SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes meeting on Wednesday 7th December 2005 at 7.00p.m. in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Swaffham.

Present: Mayor Cllr J. Stockdale (in the chair)

Councillors: - Mrs C. Baker, Mr D. Butters, Mrs P. Buxton,
Mr P. Darby, Mr B. Emmerson,
Mrs A. Greaves, Mrs Lister, Mrs F. Mann,
Mrs S. Matthews, Mr I. Sherwood.

Clerk:- Mr R. Bishop.
Deputy Clerk:- Mrs M. Meyrick
Internal Auditor:- Mr B. Clements

Public: 7

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

1.1. Cllr Wise (illness) and Cllr Cannon (work commitments).

Cllr Matthews would like to congratulate Jerome Stockdale, Carol Baker and Sheila Lister for organising the successful Christmas Light Switch on that took place on Sunday.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – for items included on the Agenda.

2.1. Cllr Darby, Cllr Emmerson and Cllr Baker declared a personal interest on item 2 as they are all directors of the museum.

2.2. Cllr Darby declared a personal interest on item 41 as he will be Mayor in 2006/07.

2.3. Cllr Stockdale declared a personal interest on item 44 as he has an allotment.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1. The minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the 5th October were agreed and signed as a true record by Mayor.

4. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT

4.1. A copy of the Responsible Finance Officer's report was given to Councillors for consideration.

4.2. Accounts to date Receipts & Payments 2005/06 were circulated to Councillors. Cllr Sherwood requested an e-mail of the report to go out with the agenda.

4.3. Internal Auditor's Report.

The internal auditors report was circulated in the papers to Councillors.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. The Town Clerk gave a budget presentation to Councillors for the year 2006/07. (Appendix 1)

5.2. A budget report was circulated to Councillors. (Appendix 2)

5.3. Budget Decisions for 2006/07.

1) CAPITAL PROJECTS

1) TOWN HALL EXTENSION

The retention of the building works was discussed as there are some items to complete, namely the gates (which have been purchased), pillars for the gates, a hard standing area for disabled visitors exiting cars outside the Cley Road entrance, snagging work to meet and in many cases improve upon DDA requirements

It was unanimously agreed for the retention of 2.5% is withheld until the building is to the satisfaction of the Town Council, even if this extends into the financial year 2006/07.

2) MUSEUM ENHANCEMENT

The Museum enhancement project was discussed as the Council have been carrying out research for improvements to the current lifting platform, these could be looked at within a Heritage Lottery Fund Grant application to further enhance the Museum, to also take the building to a higher standard beyond the current funding period of 31st December 2006.

It was unanimously agreed for a capital sum of £50,000 is put aside as a contingency to allow the Museum project to be completed. To use any balance to upgrade the current lifting platform in consultation with the Access Group. To explore the possibility of using this contingency as match funding to draw in funds from the Heritage Lottery Fund to complete the Town Hall & Museum works to a higher standard.

The layout of the agenda and the order the recommendations were set in were discussed. Cllr Buxton proposed and Cllr Emmerson seconded to follow the recommendations that are laid out in the report. Cllr Sherwood proposed and Cllr Butters seconded an amendment to look at the cost centres and the various issues at once. Cllr Buxton was happy with the amendment.

It was agreed with 7 votes for and 2 abstentions to look at each cost centre in turn and discuss as a whole before any decisions are made.

3) CEMETERY IMPROVEMENTS & CHAPEL RESTORATION

The Cemetery Improvements and Chapel Restoration were discussed along with possible grant funding for this project.

It was agreed with 7 votes for, 3 against and 1 abstention to agree in principle subject to obtaining grant funding for this project. The Council will have to approve the final detail including costings. The contribution of £5,000 in the current year's budget is added to by a further £5,000 in 2006/07.

4) ICENI PARTNERSHIP GRANT

The final part of the £115,000 originally set aside for the IcenI projects has been carried forward from last year.

It was unanimously agreed to fulfil the obligation to IcenI Partnership with the remaining money due as previously committed of £13,549

5) SKATEPARK PROJECT

The amount budgeted is surplus money carried forward from the grant monies received from Sport England for this project.

It was unanimously agreed for a sum of £5,300 to be retained in the accounts as surplus from the Skatepark Project.

6) SWIMMING POOL LAND

The budget for the swimming pool land was discussed.

It was agreed with 6 votes for, 2 against and 1 abstention that the surplus of £10,000 is transferred into the match funding budget and if there are any surplus monies after all expenditure for this land purchase is completed, that they too should be transferred to the match funding budget.

7) NORTHWELL POOL ENHANCEMENT

The Northwell Pool enhancement scheme project was discussed.

It was agreed with 8 votes for and 3 against subject to obtaining grant funding for this project of £10,000, the town council set aside £5,000 towards enhancing and managing this area in partnership with Norfolk County Council, Anglian Water and residents living in that area of town.

8) RECREATION GROUND PROJECT

The recreation ground project was discussed.

It was agreed with 8 votes for and 3 against that the Recreation Ground Project is fully endorsed to the value of £703,855. This includes the Town Council match funding contribution of £50,000 agreed back in October last year and details as outlined in the business plan. The final amount of the project can increase or decrease subject to the receipt of or securing grant funding providing the principles of the project remain the same.

9) MATCH FUNDING BUDGET

The match funding budget was discussed as the total is from re-organising finances within the Council accounts.

It was agreed with 6 votes for and 2 against for a match funding budget of £45,500 following the re-allocation of the Sports Fund, Community Centre and Swimming Pool Land balances.

10) PUBLIC WORKS LOAN

Cllr Darby proposed and Cllr Emmerson seconded to include the words 'up to a maximum amount of £125,000'.

It was agreed with 8 votes for, 1 against and 2 abstentions that a public works loan of up to £125,000 should be applied for early into 2006/07 repaid over 25 years to fund capital projects as detailed.

Cllr Matthews proposed and Cllr Mann seconded to postpone this decision until the research into the possibility of the sale of allotment land before taking out a loan is considered.

It was agreed with 8 votes for and 3 against not to postpone the decision on taking out a loan until research is carried out into the sale of allotment land has been considered.

Cllr Sherwood proposed and Cllr Emmerson seconded to go back to the order of agenda. As a point of order the council the Clerk advised the council that a decision had already been taken to change the order of the agenda.

2) ADMINISTRATION & MISCELLANEOUS

11) SALARIES NET PRECEPT/PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS & TRAVEL EXPENSES

It was unanimously agreed that the salaries and pension contributions are increased in line with what the Council have previously agreed following the Personnel Committee's recommendation, as listed in the draft budget for 2006/07.

12) INSURANCE

The Council have changed insurance companies this past year. There is a need to compare year on year under best value principles.

It was unanimously agreed that the increased budget of £13,500 covers all our requirements, with reimbursement of £3,500 coming from Icen Partnership. The Town Clerk to continue with the policy of obtaining best value for our insurance policy year on year and obtaining valuations of our buildings to ensure that they are insured at the correct level.

13) STAFF TRAINING

The staff training is covered by a Council policy and continuous professional development is important.

It was unanimously agreed for the Town Clerk to have delegated authority to manage the staff training budget. The budget for staff training is recommended to increase by £100 to £2,800 in 2006/07.

14) COUNCILLOR TRAINING

A small budget is necessary to cover training costs for Councillors who wish to attend training events on their particular interests.

It was unanimously agreed for a reduced budget of £300 to cover Councillor training costs.

15) By ELECTION/PARISH POLL

It is essential that the Council maintains a sum to cover the cost of a By Election or a Parish Poll.

It was unanimously agreed to for an increase of £100 making a total sum of £2,600; to cover the cost of a By Election or a Parish Poll.

16) ELECTION

One of the Quality Council criteria is to have 100% of Councillors who have been elected not co-opted to the Council. On the last occasion Swaffham managed to have 13 councillors offering themselves for the 13 seats.

It was unanimously agreed in principle for the Town Clerk & Deputy Town Clerk to organise recruitment road-shows in the six months or so leading into the local elections in May 2007.

17) AUDIT

It was unanimously agreed for a sum of £1,500 is set aside to cover audit costs in the year 2006/07.

18) ALL OTHER INCOME & EXPENDITURE in this cost centre R18 –

It was agreed that all other income & expenditure in the Administration & Miscellaneous cost centre is increased in line with inflation as detailed in the draft budget.

3) EQUIPMENT

19) TRUCK LEASE & MAINT/FUEL/INSURANCE

It was agreed with 1 against that the budget for the truck lease be increased to £1,350 and Maintenance/Fuel & Insurance costs increased to £1,500 for the year 2006/07.

20) OUTSIDE EQUIPMENT REPAIRS & REPLACEMENTS

It was agreed with 1 against that outside equipment repairs should be £800 and replacements should be £900 in the year 2006/07.

21) OFFICE EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE & RENEWALS

It was agreed with 1 against that these budgets are increased by to £1,700 and £1,600 respectively taking into account of increases in costs from our current agreements.

22) TOWN HALL OFFICE FURNITURE RENEWALS

Cllr Sherwood proposed and Cllr Lister seconded that a budget of £1000 is allocated.

It was agreed with 10 votes for and 1 against that £1,000 is budgeted in 2006/07 for office furniture renewals.

23) TOWN HALL SOUND SYSTEM

A sound system was discussed for the town hall and it was strongly recommended that as a minimum the current equipment which does not belong to the Council is replaced and upgraded.

The vote was lost with 3 votes for and 5 against for a Taiden Discussion Unit to be purchased at a Capital Cost of £4,000 spread over 5 year with a public works loan costing £978 per year.

24) TOWN HALL PHONE SYSTEM

It was agreed with 1 abstention that the Phone system lease of £1300 is the budget in 2006/07.

4) TOWN HALL

25) OFFICE AND CHAMBER RENTS

It was agreed with 9 votes for that there be no change for the Town Hall pricing structure for the Offices and Chamber Rents for 2006/07.

26) RATES

The payment of rates on the Town Hall for 2006/07 of £7,500 were unanimously agreed.

27) ALL OTHER EXPENDITURE in this cost centre

It was unanimously agreed that all other expenditure in the Town Hall cost centre is as detailed in the draft budget.

5) OPEN SPACES

28) GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT 121 and 134

It was agreed with 1 against and 1 abstention to increase the grounds maintenance contract to £18,500 to include a higher specification of work, this is split into two budget headings for £15,000 and £3,500 respectively, the latter to cover work required at the Churchyard in 2006/07.

29) STREET FURNITURE

It was agreed with 7 votes for, 1 against and 2 abstentions for a budget of £1,400 to cover street furniture maintenance or replacement.

30) BUTTERCROSS/PEDLARS SIGN

Cllr Sherwood proposed an amendment and Cllr Mann seconded for a reduced budget by £2500 giving a revised total of £5000. It was agreed with 5 votes for, 4 against with 1 abstention.

It was agreed with 5 votes for, 4 against and 1 abstention that The budget contingency for the Buttercross and the Pedlar Sign is retained at £5000.

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R31) TREE MAINTENANCE

Cllr Sherwood proposed an amendment to reduce budget to £1000 but there were no seconders.

It was agreed with 9 votes for, 1 against and 1 abstention for a budget of £2,500 to allow areas of concern this coming year to be either maintained by trimming or pollarding.

32) TOWN CENTRE FLORAL DISPLAYS/ RECREATION GROUND RECYCLING CREDITS

It was unanimously agreed the Floral display budget is increased to £1,900 to allow the replacement of tubs in the year 2006/07.

33) ALL OTHER INCOME & EXPENDITURE in this cost centre

It was unanimously agreed that all other income and expenditure in the Open Spaces cost centre is as detailed in the draft budget for 2006/07.

6) AMENITIES & AGENCY

34) MUSEUM ANNUAL GRANT

It was unanimously agreed that the Museum Grant is increased by £100 to £3,200 as stated in the projected figures for the enhancement project.

35) CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

It was agreed with 7 votes for and 1 against for the Christmas lights budget to be increased by £100 to £1,400 in 2006/07.

36) TWINNING BURSARY

Cllr Mann proposed an amendment for the bursary to be £500 but there were no seconders.

It was agreed with 1 vote against and 1 abstention for the Twinning Bursary for 2006/07 to be topped up to £1,000.

37) WEBSITE

Cllr Mann proposed an amendment for the budget to be increased by £50 lost. 5 for 1 against 4 abstention.

The vote for the amendment was lost and therefore the vote to increase the web site budget for 2006/07 by £150 to £750 was 5 votes for, 1 against and 4 abstentions.

38) BEST KEPT GARDEN COMPETITION

It was unanimously agreed that there is no budget for the Best Kept Garden Competition for the year 2006/07.

39) TOWN CRIER

It was unanimously agreed that there is no budget for a Town Crier in 2006/07 and the Open Spaces & Amenities Committee should carry out a review for subsequent years.

40) SECTION 137 GRANTS

It was agreed to increase the Section 137 grants budget to £1,000. It is further recommended for the Town Clerk to prepare a draft grants policy for the Council to consider at their February or March 2006 meeting in preparation for the new financial year.

41) MAYORS ALLOWANCE, RECEPTION, CIVIC SERVICE & MAYORAL CHAIN REPAIRS

It was agreed with 1 against that all Mayoral expenses are increased in line with the draft budget for 2006/07.

R42) YOUTH COUNCIL

It was agreed with 1 abstention that the Town Clerk carries out the necessary research to initiate and set up a Youth Council in Swaffham, with terms of reference and a constitution. It was also agreed that a budget of £700 is set aside for the Youth Council for 2006/07.

R43) ALL OTHER INCOME & EXPENDITURE in this cost centre

It was agreed that all other income and expenditure in the cost centre for Amenities & Agency is as listed in the draft budget for 2006/07.

7) ALLOTMENTS

44) ALLOTMENT PRICES

It was agreed with 2 against that allotment rents are increased from October 2006 by 10% across the board, rounded up or down by 0.25% for convenience of invoicing.

45) ALLOTMENTS REPAIRS/REPLACEMENTS & REVIEW

It was agreed with 9 votes for and 2 abstentions for the Town Clerk to manage the budget accordingly and prioritize maintenance, improvements and clearing up. Also to complete the progress report of the review.

46) ALL OTHER EXPENDITURE in this cost centre

It was agreed with 8 votes for and 1 against all other allotment expenditure is recommended as in the draft budget.

8) CEMETERY

47) CEMETERY PRICES

It was agreed with 8 votes for and 2 against to increase all charges by 5% across the board from 1st April 2006. The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk to complete a review including comparisons under best value principles and work with the Finance & General Purposes Committee who would have delegated authority to decide on a new pricing structure.

48) CEMETERY MAINTENANCE

It was unanimously agreed that a budget of £1,600 is set for Cemetery maintenance.

49) CEMETERY WASTE REMOVAL

It was unanimously agreed that a budget of £800 is set aside for waste and soil removal.

R50) ALL OTHER INCOME & EXPENDITURE in this cost centre

It was unanimously agreed for all other income and expenditure in the Cemetery cost centre is set as in the draft budget.

9) MARKET

51) CASUAL TRADERS

It was agreed with 8 votes for to allow the Market time to recover and enable the Market to get back to its full quota of traders not to increase the casual site rental charge for the financial year 2006/07 but to increase by £1 to £23 from 1st April 2007.

52) LICENSED TRADERS

It was unanimously agreed to reward the licensed traders by recommending no increase in site rental charge for the financial year 2006/07 but to increase across the board by 5% from 1st April 2007.

53) FARMERS MARKET

It was agreed with 10 votes for and 1 abstention not to increase the site rental charge for the financial year 2006/07 and to complete the necessary research to look at ways in which to improve on the current numbers of traders and customers for the farmers market.

54) MARKET REFUSE

It was agreed with 9 votes for and 1 abstention for the contract with Breckland Council/Serco should continue for the year 2006/07.

55) ALL OTHER EXPENDITURE in this cost centre

It was agreed with 10 votes for all other expenditure in this cost centre as in the draft budget.

10) PRECEPT

56) PRECEPT

Cllr Sherwood proposed and Cllr Darby seconded to amend the precept to £147,500.

It was agreed with 10 votes for and 1 against that the precept for 2006/07 be set at £147,500.

The meeting closed at 10.03p.m.

Chairman_____