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Town Hall, High Street

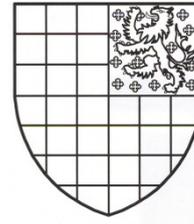
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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance Working Party held online via zoom on Wednesday 12th January 2022 at 9.30am

Present: Cllrs G Earl, J Herbert, J Lamb (Chair), I Makepeace, Dr G Mayhew, K Wood and (not appointed to the Working Party) Cllrs S Catlin and W Maples

In attendance: Town Clerk

10. Election of Chair

Cllr Lamb was elected Chair

11. Apologies: There were none

12. Member's Declarations of Interest: There were none

13. Minutes: The Minutes of the meeting held on 28th October 2021 were received and agreed as an accurate record to be signed at a later date.

14. Chair's announcements: There were none

15. Draft budget 2022 to 2023

15.1 The Town Clerk gave a brief overview of the budget, confirming elements already considered by the Working Party at its meeting on 28th October and updating Members on the recommendation from the Buildings Working Party which had met earlier in the week. The Buildings Working Party had resolved, in light of the updated report regarding the Town Hall heating project, to recommend that the earmarked reserve for Town Hall maintenance be returned to £100,000 to meet the requirements of a replacement gas boiler system, an energy audit of the Town Hall, further exploration of measures to reduce carbon emissions and increase energy efficiency, as well as continue to maintain the Town Hall

15.2 The Town Clerk confirmed that as yet the Council Tax base figure had not been received from Lewes District Council. The draft budget before the Working Party therefore proposed a Precept of £1,259,778, an increase of 3.79%. For a Band D property that would be £207.25, which is a 15 pence per week increase.

15.3 Members sought clarification on revenue maintenance for the Town Hall and earmarked reserves for maintenance and when that expenditure was expected to happen. The Town Clerk confirmed that if Council agreed to replace the gas boilers this would happen in 2022 and this has been estimated as costing circa £185,000. The energy audit would also be undertaken along with a building survey in 2022. This would be followed by agreeing and implementing systems and measures such as the Air Source Heat Pump, insulation etc. The estimated costs of a hybrid system of gas boilers and an ASHP, excluding surveys and any resulting ancillaries, was a total of circa £305,000. This would leave very little for other identified repairs in the Council Plan for 2021 to 2022 let alone anything identified from the energy audits and building

survey.

- 15.4** It was noted that our buildings, as valuable and well used community resources, should be invested in, with a proactive maintenance programme as well as potential developments to make them more viable to more people (such as technology to enable hybrid meetings) and to preserve them for future generations.
- 15.5** It was queried as to whether alternative funding options could be explored such as grants, crowd funding, donations etc. The Town Clerk said they can, and in the past grants have been secured for works, but the budget can't be set based on unknown income such as donations. It was also suggested that the Council be more proactive in how it funds activities.
- 15.6** It was noted that even with an increase of the Precept to 3.79% this wasn't going to give protection for increasing costs such as utilities.
- 15.7** Members asked if information on the use of the Council's buildings, who uses them, how much they are used could be provided in future.
- 15.8** Members also requested a clearer breakdown of the budget, to aid understanding and decision making. The Town Clerk confirmed this was a future action for herself and the Responsible Financial Officer when was recruited, along with medium term financial planning.
- 15.9** **It was resolved that:**
The draft budget setting a Precept of £1,259,778 and an increase in Council Tax Band D of 3.79% be recommended to Full Council.

The meeting ended at 10:40am

Signed:

Date: