



**Minutes** of a meeting of the Finance Working Party held on Monday 5 December 2022 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Lewes Town Hall.

**Present:**

Councillor Earl  
Councillor Lamb (Chair)  
Councillor Mayhew  
Councillor Makepeace  
Councillor Wood

**In attendance**

Town Clerk  
Responsible Financial Officer

**1. Election of Chair**

1.1. Councillor Lamb was elected as chair of the working party for the municipal year 2022 to 2023.

**2. Filming of council meetings and mobile phones**

2.1. The procedures were noted.

**3. Apologies for absence**

3.1. There were apologies from Councillor Herbert who had personal commitments.

**4. Members' declarations of interests**

4.1. There were none.

**5. Question time**

5.1. There were none.

**6. Chair's announcements and urgent items**

6.1. There were none.

**7. Officers' reports**

**7.1. Draft budget for the financial year 2023 to 2024**

7.2. The Town Clerk explained that the draft budget has been presented in a revised format developed by the Town Clerk and locum Responsible Financial Officer through a series of workshops with councillors. The Finance Working Party were invited to comment on the revised format which will be further developed to include projected budgets for 2024 to 2025 and 2025 to 2026.

7.3. The Town Clerk explained that this was an initial draft budget for the working party to consider which will be subject to further changes as the Council progresses

through the budget setting process. The Town Council's budget is under great pressure with substantial increases to utility costs, salary increases and general costs. Work is ongoing to provide projections on increases in areas such as business rates, utility bills and contractor costs. The results of recent surveys and research are also yet to be received and will impact on the budget.

7.4. The budget currently reflects a 5% increase on salaries although the national pay increase has not been confirmed yet.

7.5. Income from hire of venues shows no increase yet and the working party was asked to consider a steer on this. It was noted that income was under in the current financial year and that the budgeted income figures may not reflect the actual income received. It was noted that prior actuals were difficult to use to inform income due to covid. The suggesting of increasing hire charges by 5% or by 10% was considered but it was also noted that this may reduce occupancy levels resulting in loss of income. It was agreed that market research should be undertaken to ascertain venue hire costs in the local area. In early 2023 analysis of occupancy rates will be undertaken but that data won't be ready in time for setting the budget. It was agreed to keep the income figures as they are in the draft budget but to review increasing the hire charges following market research into local charges.

7.6. It was agreed to remove the tourism budget as there are no plans to use this for the forthcoming year.

7.7. The budget for the councillor and staff Christmas meal was removed. Alternative suggestions were offered for consideration.

7.8. Travel and subsistence for councillors was reduced from £2,600 to £1,600 and would be used for travel outside of the Town. Travel within the town would only be paid if there was a medical or similar need.

7.9. The proposed budget of £10,000 for contributing to an access officer was removed on the basis that the Town Council may not be required to contribute, but if it did this could be met from the General Fund.

7.10. It was agreed to reduce community grants from £60,000 to £50,000 as the last three years no more than £45,000 has been awarded. This was balanced with the increases in costs and greater need. It would be reviewed in future years.

7.11. It was agreed that formal service funding agreements should be implemented with monitoring and review processes. Additional officer resource would need to be assigned to undertake this work.

7.12. Further information was required on the contribution to CCTV.

7.13. The bonfire reception was reduced from £1,000 to £750 with a more focussed group of attendees and more of a light buffet and refreshments rather than a sit-down meal which meant attendees would be able to watch the procession.

7.14. The Mayor making reception budget was reduced from £4,000 to £2,500 and the event to be planned accordingly.

7.15. The twin town civic visits budget should be reviewed with primarily the Mayor and Mayoress visiting the twin towns. In anniversary years where there is a resigning of treaties additional support should be given by sending the Town Clerk or other officer. 2023 is an anniversary year. It was noted that the Mayor of the Town Council

changes each year. It was agreed that a maximum of three visitors would be received from the twin towns.

7.16. It was agreed that staff overtime for attendance at events and meetings should be reviewed to ensure it is efficient. The Town Clerk explained that staffing costs would be accounted for within the event budgets where applicable.

7.17. It was agreed to allocate £20,000 for festive lights.

The meeting closed at 20:27pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....