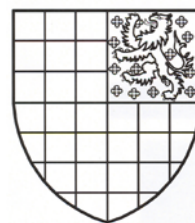


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**LEWES  
TOWN  
COUNCIL**

## ***MINUTES***

of the meeting of the **Finance Working Party**

held on **Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2016**, in the **Yarrow Room, Town Hall, Lewes** at **7:00pm**.

**PRESENT** Cllrs M Chartier; D Cooper; S Murray; R O'Keeffe; A Rowell (*Chair*) and (*not appointed to the Working Party*) Cllr Catlin

*In attendance:* S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*)

**FWP2015/09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Apologies were received from Cllr Addecott (no reason offered).

**FWP2015/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** There were none.

**FWP2015/11 QUESTIONS:** There were none (No public or press were present).

**FWP2015/12 MINUTES:** The minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015 were received and signed as an accurate record.

**FWP2015/13 REMIT OF THE WORKING PARTY:**

The working party was asked to consider the detail of estimated expenditure and income for the Council's operations, and to agree a budget and level of Council Tax precept for the 2016/17 year, for recommendation to Council, ensuring appropriate provision for items constituting the Council Plan for 2016/17.

**FWP2015/14 BUSINESS OF THE MEETING:**

1 This meeting continued the work of the previous meeting; the basis for discussion was the draft budget considered earlier, with points highlighted for further explanation or background detail.

The Town Council (LTC) faced an enforced increase to precept to simply maintain budgeted nett expenditure at the present level, due to phased reduction in the grant received from the government's support grant scheme (established to offset the effect of a revised method of calculating the domestic tax-base).

The government had recently indicated that they would *not* extend the referendum/precept capping policy to include Parish Councils for 2016/17.

It was understood that, in future, Lewes District Council's special expenses recharge in respect of those parks and open spaces transferred to LTC would reduce to balance an increase in parish precept.

2 The draft budgets presented took account of:

- Provision for known/anticipated increases in public Utility supplies, NNDR etc.
- Adjustments for completed and imminent (previously-approved) projects.
- Provision for elements identified in the Council's forward plan.
- Establishment of appropriate reserves for agreed/anticipated projects.
- Provision for anticipated increases in insurance and other overhead costs etc.
- Provision for known increase in employers' pension and NI contribution.
- Refinements of overhead allocation to services and base service cost estimates.
- Recognition of anticipated adjustment to salaries.
- Provision for known and anticipated increases in cost of contracted services.
- Re-establishment of exhausted reserves and continuation of prudent contributions.
- Provision for costs of assets or services accepted through devolution by Lewes District Council, and for necessary transitional costs.
- Fees & charges tariff increase of 3%, rounded to an appropriate value for the

service concerned.

It was acknowledged that there was a continuing need to address the proper maintenance of the Council's physical assets and adequately fund continuing services.

3 The draft budget combined specific amounts for known costs and committed project items, with prudent allowances for reserves, and provided for a flexible response to unforeseen issues. Members recognized that some projects could exceed original "informed" preliminary estimates of cost, and earmarked reserves could be insufficient. Building and engineering works were of particular concern in this regard, as the Council's assets had all been taken-on with considerable historic dilapidation, and contexts such as heritage listing status. Projects could be "topped-up" by drawing from the General Fund which; although adequate, would then need to be restored in future years to the levels recommended by government auditors. It was possible that this could drop below an acceptable minimum in the next two years.

4 With this background in mind various individual amendments were proposed and discussed. Decisions were incorporated as the meeting progressed; modelled on a spreadsheet and projected for the impact to be immediately considered. Two points caused particular deliberation:

A support grant to Lewes Town Partnership (LTP), with a proposal to reduce the sum and review its continuation beyond October 2016.

An increase to the amount provided towards repairs at the Town Hall, where significant cost was expected in the near future. It was generally agreed that a review might be usefully set up, into the income generated at the building.

5 The draft budget as originally presented had been updated to reflect the recently-published increase in the number of "Band 'D' equivalent households" for 2016/17, which reduced the individual impact of any increase in precept.

6 At the end of the meeting the amendments resulted in a precept requirement of £919,872. This represents an increase on the current year of 17.86%, with the actual cost to a Band 'D' household rising to £151.56 per year. This is an extra £18.39 per year or 35.36 pence per week.

**FWP2015/15**

**CONCLUSIONS:**

Council will be asked to consider the resulting budget and precept requirement at its meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016.

**FWP2015/16**

The Chair declared the meeting closed.

*The meeting ended at 8:15pm*

Signed: .....

Date: .....