

**MAESTEG TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING**

Minutes of an **EXTRAORDINARY** meeting of the **Council** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Monday, 4th January 2021.**

PRESENT:

COUNCILLORS:

A James (Mayor)

L Beedle, R Collins, P Davies, R Davies, K Edwards,
R Lewis, R Martin, R Penhale-Thomas,
C Reeves, G Thomas, L Thomas, P White and
I Williams.

APOLOGIES for joining the meeting late were received from Cllrs R Collins, P Davies and P White

APOLOGIES for absence received from Councillors P Jenkins, W May and S Smith

DECLARATION OF INTEREST:

Cllrs R Collins, P Davies, K Edwards, R Penhale-Thomas and P White declared an interest in items relating to Bridgend County Borough Council and advised that they would leave the meeting when discussing the precept figure.

Cllrs R Lewis and I Williams declared an interest in items that may relate to Llangynwyd Middle Community Council.

Cllr L Thomas declared an interest in items relating to AWEN Cultural Trust.

314. TO DISCUSS THE BUDGET REQUIREMENTS FOR 2021-22

Prior to the meeting members were provided with details of council's actual income and expenditure for the first two thirds of this financial year 2020-21 and an estimate for the final third.

Also provided was a suggested budget for discussion/approval/or amendment and a table that showed council taxpayers liabilities based on the various council tax bands.

The Covid-19 pandemic has seriously impacted the council's 2020-21 budget in as much that it has increased surplus funds to £285,148, but regrettably prevented the proposed spend on programs such as Capital Asset Transfers (CAT) (Gross £50,000) and on Children's Summer Play schemes (£6,240). The underspend on the CAT project is accounted for separately in 2021-22 by reducing the above-mentioned surplus figure by £30,000. Play schemes cost is earmarked in 2020-21 and therefore this also reduces the surplus figure brought forward into 2021-22

Given the size of the surplus fund, the council, could if it wishes, plan for a larger than normal budget for 2021-22 and also maintain the existing precept requirement (£330,919) by using part or all of said surplus.

Using all the surplus in 2021-22 would leave no room for manoeuvre in future financial years. For example, setting a similar budget of £538,290 (includes playschemes) in 2022-23 would increase a Band D's property council tax charge by £37.00 a year and a Band I by £74.00; Council would also find itself with no reserves or contingency funds to fall back on. It is imperative that Members give this serious consideration.

Proposed expenditure:

- 1) Staff costs - The £53,000 figure is based on three staff members - the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and the new position of council offices' cleaner. The council previously paid a private cleaning company £750 per calendar month, the appointment of an in-house Cleaner halves this cost.
- 2) Reviewing Mayor's expenditure allowed me to reduce the overall costs by £300. to £2,500.
- 3) Members costs have been increased to £2,550 based on the fact that each member is allowed to claim £150 per annum. Not all Members have used this facility.
- 4) Premises costs have been reduced by £7,500 as a result of cancelling the cleaning contract with the cleaning company (see note 1)
- 5) Covid-19 has been removed as costs are minimal and can be incorporated in Premises costs.
- 6) Insurance - A new contract is due in September 2021 and details at this time are unknown, therefore, as a precaution the amount has increased by £790.
- 7) Telephones/IT there is no expected change
- 8) General Fees - the £23,500 includes amounts for OVW, Audit Wales, Internal Audit, Training, Cenotaph cleaning etc. The Clerk intends to meet with Audit Wales to discuss their fee which is expected to be severe, however they won't provide an invoice until all investigations have been completed.
- 9) The Capital budget of £200,000 is meant to serve the cost of repairs to the council offices, traffic calming measures and street furniture. This amount is above normal expenditure and two alternatives may apply.

- a) Accept this figure and do as much as possible
- b) Holdback on expenditure and invite BCBC to be involved in the traffic calming projects. Also await the BCBC Conservation officers search for grants towards the council's listed building. This may allow you to at least halve the £200,000. In any case costings must be obtained and discussed at a future finance meeting.

Other capital projects that need investigation are bus shelters and public benches that are under this council's control some of which need replacing or maintenance. Members have already received details of these bus shelters and benches.

Members debated this item whereby Capital Projects be separated into two cost codes one for Capital Projects and another for Maintenance of bus shelters/benches/building, however other members felt it would be wiser to remain as one cost code to offer more manoeuvrability. Currently whilst initial enquiries have been made regarding traffic calming measures no final agreement has been made.

It was also proposed that a vote be made:

Cllr L Thomas proposed that building maintenance be shown separately then it requested to be amended to be renamed Capital projects and maintenance.

Amendment to read Capital Projects & Maintenance = 10 votes

Proposal to split into Capital Projects and Maintenance = 4 votes

Following the result of the vote the amendment to change the name to Capital Projects & Maintenance

It was also **agreed** that the Projects Committee look further into the traffic calming measures.

- 10) S.137 has been combined with the Wellbeing budget giving a total of £40,000 to be used as appropriate. The Hardship Fund from 2020-21 should be considered part of Wellbeing and S.137
- 11) Car park toilet - similar to previous year with only a £300 increase.
- 12) Market toilet - no longer necessary as the disabled toilet in the basement of the building to be used as public toilet, however due to current Covid-19 Tier 4 restrictions it is currently closed.

- 13) Dog waste bags - reduced from previous year as a substantial amount remain in house and enquiries are in hand for a new system to be applied on the local cycle route.
- 14) Festival- £20K suggested, no spend in current year and Members are requested to consider the likelihood of the Festival being held in 2021. Withdrawing this cost head would increase year end reserves by £20K

Members deliberated whether or not a festival would be viable in 2021-22 due to the ongoing pandemic. It was proposed that a nominal sum of £5K be kept within the cost code in anticipation that something can be done to celebrate once the challenges of the pandemic have subsided. Additionally, it was also noted that previous festivals were held in the Town Hall which is not due to be completed until Spring 2022.

A vote ensued with 8 members agreeing to change the amount to £5K and 6 members wanting it to remain the same.

- 15) Awen/Maesteg Town Hall – Minute Number 247.2 dated 8th January 2019 resolves that: Council agreed to raise £15K from 2019-20 Precept, together with rolling this and subsequent contributions (2020-21) forward to create a fit-out of the Hall as part of the re-development. These monies to be held in the Council’s reserves until required for the purpose stated.

Members discussed this and it was proposed by Cllr G Thomas and seconded by Cllr R Lewis to keep the budget as £30k and to discuss whether or not to add a further £15k for 2021/22 at rescind minute 274.2 and funding to the Agenda for next Full Council meeting. Whereby Cllr K Edwards advised that he did not ask to rescind the minute as in order to rescind a minute it has to be placed in writing by 6 members of the Council. Cllr G Thomas wished that it be recorded that it was the intention of the Council to budget £30k and discuss the 2021/22 funding at a future meeting.

To date money has not been set aside for this purpose and AWEN following verbal enquiries have no record of this resolution and have failed to respond to further enquiries in December. Members were requested to consider this matter and whether or not to proceed with the resolution or to rescind the minute. Should Council decide to proceed an additional £15K needs to be added to the 2021-22 budget making the total £45K.

It was **agreed** that the matter of the Town Hall funding be discussed further at a Full Council meeting.

- 16) Playschemes - no spend this year and therefore the earmarked £6,240 reduces surplus balance brought forward. Again, due to the pandemic there are uncertainties as to whether the playschemes will proceed therefore 2022-23 will include similar figure in the budget.
- 17) Christmas Festivities - similar budget to previous years due to smaller tree and lack of parade in 2020-21.
- 18) Floral displays - following a costing review and new tender for hanging baskets there is a reduction in the previous year's budget of £1,100. The Chair of Finance advised that many of the contracts are being reviewed in order to make any necessary savings.
- 19) Rights of Way - £15K. A reduction of £3K on the current year. This council spends a sum of money considerably higher than many other Town and Community Councils and receives only a fraction (£3K) of the cost back from Bridgend CBC.

It is appreciated that BCBC has a limited budget but is it fair on Llynfi Valley council taxpayers to subsidise the major council to such an extent.

I would like to suggest that council debate at some future date the possibility of employing a "Maintenance Person" who would be responsible for rights of way maintenance, fly tipping clearance, minor repairs to the building and other ad hoc matters. The cost of such (including the cost of a van) would be covered by the existing rights of way and fly tipping budgets. The position would also be subsidised by the £3K paid by Bridgend CBC towards rights of way maintenance. The current Rights of Way contractor has advised that he will be looking at retiring at the end of 2021.

- 20) Cemetery – Fixed amount whereby sum agreed with resident of Cemetery House for opening and closing the cemetery gates.
- 21) Fly tipping - It has been agreed that each Ward receives an equal amount toward this project. For the time being it has been set at £5K making a total of £20K in the budget. (See comment above "Handyman")

Cllr G Thomas raised the previous request of a 3 year ward specific plan and requests that this fly tipping fund is renamed to Ward Specific Funding.

Members discussed this as previously the Council had ward specific funding but it was removed to allow bigger projects to be completed throughout the Town. It was agreed to change the name as per Cllr Thomas request.

- 22) Hardship Fund - transferred to S137 and Well-being
- 23) Capital Asset Transfer - no longer applicable as clubs had applied and the money is reserve for this purpose.
- 24) Office costs – there have been considerable savings this year due to reduction in stationery costs and working from home during the majority of the year. Therefore, there has been £2.5K reduction from current year’s budget figure.

RESOLVED:

- Capital Projects is renamed to Capital Projects & Maintenance
- Projects Committee look further into the traffic calming measures
- S137 is to include the Power of Wellbeing
- Festival Budget be reduced to £5K
- Town Hall funding be discussed further at a Full Council meeting.
- To Note all information and agree the budget

315. PRECEPT REQUIREMENT FOR 2021-22

Councillors R Collins, P Davies, K Edwards, R Penhale-Thomas and P White left the meeting; therefore, took no part in the discussion on the precept requirement.

Members were reminded that the figures were based on the precept for 2021-22 to remain the same as that of 2020-21 i.e. £330,919.00

The Tax base used in the calculations is 5618.30 and was supplied by Bridgend County Borough Council. In effect this means that for every £1,000.00 raised, a Band D property owner would be expected to pay 17.799 pence (rounded off)

For your information a “tax base” is the number of Band D equivalent dwellings in a local authority area. To calculate the tax base for an area, the number of dwellings in each council tax band is adjusted to take account of any discounts, premiums or exemptions.

Based on the figures, a band D property owner will pay £58.90 council tax and members were provided with a schedule explaining what other property owners/occupiers in the various council tax property bands would be subjected to.

Chair of Finance proposed that the precept raised for 2021-22 remains the same as 2020-21 a figure of **£330,919.00**

RESOLVED: Clerk to advise BCBC Finance department of Maesteg Town Council precept requirement for 2021-22.

Read and corrections accepted at a remote meeting of the Council held on 2nd February 2021

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Mayor