

**MAESTEG TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING**

Minutes of a HYBRID meeting of the **EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL** held at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Talbot Street, Maesteg and remotely via Microsoft Teams and, on **Tuesday, 13th December 2022**

PRESENT:

COUNCILLORS:

A James (Mayor)

F Abedalkarim, AR Davies, C Davies, P Davies,
P Jenkins, R Penhale-Thomas, M Rowlands,
G Thomas, L Thomas, G Williams

APOLOGIES were received from Cllrs C Knight, R Martin and I Williams

DECLARATION OF INTEREST:

Cllrs C Davies, P Davies, P Jenkins and R Penhale-Thomas declared interests in matters relating to BCBC.

Cllrs P Davies and M Rowlands declared interests in matters relating to S137 policy amendments.

371. TO DISCUSS THE TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS THE MAYOR HAD WITH THE 2 COMPANIES THAT PROVIDES QUOTES FOR REPLACING FIRE DOORS TO REAR OF THE BUILDING

The Mayor advised he has not had the conversation with the two companies as the price difference between quote 1 and 2 was around £4,000. A member stated that the question to ask was what was included and if the quotes were like for like. Another member advised that the cheaper option is ideal for an external fire door and the more expensive one just makes little sense.

The Mayor advised that an intermittent fire strip is the only key component needed for a fire door as this expands to stop fire spreading. A member mentioned that he was aware of fire doors being installed recently in Caerau Men's Shed which were a reasonable price and satisfied the need. The Clerk advised that the company the member referred to does not do external fire doors as we have already enquired with them.

Cllr AR Davies **proposed**, seconded by Cllrs G Thomas and P Jenkins that we accept quote 1 that was discussed in December's full council meeting.

A member noted that the Council offices is Grade II* listed building and to make the potential contractor aware of this. The Clerk advised that she has been in contact with BCBC conservation officer who has provided guidance on this.

In addition to the door the Mayor requests that the contractor be asked to add a quality varnish to the door to provide longevity to the investment.

RESOLVED: Council to proceed with quote 1 and ask the contractor to send details of the proposed replacement door to the Clerk to forward to BCBC building conservation team prior to commencing any work on site for approval of proposed replacement.

372. TO DISCUSS AMENDING THE S137 POLICY FOR ORGANISATIONS WHO ARE PROVIDING WARM HUBS DURING THE WINTER

Cllrs M Rowlands and P Davies declared an interest in this item as they are involved in running warm hubs in Caerau and therefore took no part in the discussion on the amendment of the S137 policy.

Cllr G Thomas **proposed**, seconded by Cllrs A James and L Thomas that the council amend the S137 policy to say “in exceptional circumstances the full council may grant additional grants in addition to the annual request.”

Members queried if the additional grants will have a maximum limit? Members queried whether an amount up to should be stated on the S137 policy? It was also noted that the warm hubs varied in size and that their requests could potentially be different depending on needs of the venue. Members also discussed that grants should be equitable to all organisations.

The Chair of Finance advised that all grants applied for be discussed on their application and Council do not have to give the full amount requested. The Chair of finance also advised that S137 is for groups and organisations who require financial help and it was noted that the S137 policy provides the correct criteria for applications.

Members asked how the Council will let people know of the change in policy for those providing warm hubs? The Chair of Finance advised that all organisations need to apply and these applications will be discussed in full council.

Members deliberated that the Council utilise the website, social media page. The Chair of Finance advised Council is not allowed to tell organisations to apply but can advise that S137 Grants are available. In addition to this it was **agreed** not to email organisations as some groups / organisations may be omitted from the email.

RESOLVED:

- Amend the S137 policy to say “in exceptional circumstances the full council may grant additional grants in addition to the annual request.”
- Place the new S137 Policy onto website and social media

373. TO DISCUSS ADDING FUNDS TO MEMBERS EXPENSES & VAN DUE TO CURRENT OVERSPEND

In December full Council, the Chair of Finance advised that the Council did not budget for the IRP payment increase and additional van costs at the start of the year, he advised that as the Council cannot be in the red for any budget lines that they move monies from reserves and bring them into the black to enter the new year.

Members queried if the members expenses were for the current financial year or next financial year? He was advised that the Deputy Mayor payment, vans MOT and service were unknown costs last year but can be budgeted for next year.

Cllr G Thomas **proposed**, seconded by Cllr P Davies that the following monies be moved from reserves to cover the shortfall:

- Members Expenses: move £765.21
- Van: move £800.00

All members agreed to the proposed amounts.

Chair of Personnel queried whether the CMO has been provided with any financial aid following the van now being stored in the unit? Members advised that it should be an employee's duty to get to work and the Council aren't responsible for this. The Chair of Personnel responded that the CMO did the Council a favour keeping the van in his garage until the Council sorted a unit to store it so we should offer financial aid in return. Another member queried whether the provision of a vehicle was within the CMO contract that suggested he has the use of a work van to and from work – this was confirmed as not being in the CMO contract. An alternative member stated that even in BCBC they do not offer this service for their workers and didn't think that public funds could be used to get an employee to work. Chair of Personnel stated that technically we have been doing this all along as there was no unit for it to be housed. Another member stated that the cost-of-living increase was briefly discussed previously for other staff and it was declined on a legal basis due to public funding. It was **agreed** that the Personnel Committee can look at this in more detail.

RESOLVED:

- £765.21 be moved from reserves to the Members Expenses budget line
- £800.00 be moved from reserves to the Van budget line
- Personnel Committee to discuss the Cost-of-living issues for staff members

374. TO AGREE THE DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2023-24

Members were provided with the proposed draft budget for 2023-24 with the changes that were agreed at the November full Council meeting.

The Chair of Finance advised that previously the Finance Committee and Full Council had gone through this budget and he **proposed**, seconded by Cllrs F Abedalkarim and L Thomas that this budget be accepted.

A member raised concerns about the ward specific fund being reduced from £10,000 to £5,000 as Caerau have used more than 50% of their ward fund this year with several months of the year still to come. The chair of finance advised that this had been voted on previously and members will have to wait 6 months to overrule the minute or enter the process to rescind this minute.

A member asked if we are to increase the precept or not. Chair of finance advised that last year the precept was £330,919.00 and this year it will be approx. £301,000.00 so this is a reduction from last year. The Clerk advised that within the draft budget the overall fraud divided by 5 gave a figure of £47,600.00 which would be reduced each year to offset the fraud.

Another member asked if we should increase the Christmas lights budget and invest in new lights to enhance the town and surrounding areas. The Chair of Finance advised that due to poor record keeping in previous years it was difficult to determine the individual costs of lights, parade etc and that within the budget the Christmas Lights are one budget line and another line has been made for Christmas Parade. In addition to this a different Christmas lighting contractor will be invited to January's full council meeting to discuss what new lighting features are available.

Members **agreed** to leave the budget as it is presented today, when the new lighting contractor has provided a quote, we will be in a better position to determine the budget going forward. The Chair of Finance also advised that the budget is currently set as a worst-case scenario, he continued stating that historically we underspend on many budget lines so, instead of increasing the precept we can get new lights from the reserves.

RESOLVED: Accept the budget for 2023-24

375. TO SET THE PRECEPT FOR 2023-24

The Clerk advised that in prior years members of BCBC leave the meeting as the precept request is sent to BCBC who then review the request and issue payment.

Cllrs P Davies, C Davies and R Penhale-Thomas left the meeting and therefore took no part in the discussion on the precept requirement for 2023-24.

Cllr P Jenkins remained in the meeting and advised that he has not taken part in the vote but remained seated in the Chamber to avoid the cold weather outside.

The Clerk advised of the calculation that Council tax is calculated and advised of what Maesteg Town Council can raise:

The Tax base used in the calculations is 5601.80 and was supplied by Bridgend County Borough Council (see email 22/11/2022). From the agreed budget a total precept requirement of £301,107.00 would equate to a band D property owner paying £53.75 council tax which is £5.27 reduction from 2022-23 which was £59.02.

Members were also provided with a schedule explaining what other property owners/occupiers in the various council tax property bands would be subjected to.

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.

Chair of Finance **proposed** and was seconded by Cllrs AR Davies and L Thomas that the precept raised for 2023-24 be the budgeted figure of **£301,107.00**

RESOLVED: Clerk to advise BCBC Finance department of Maesteg Town Council precept requirement for 2023-24

Minutes emailed to Councillors to Read on 13th December 2022
Minutes accepted at a Hybrid meeting of the Council held on 10th January 2023

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Mayor