



**Minutes of the Meeting of Finance & Administration Committee held at 19:00
on Tuesday 7 January 2025 in the small hall of the Village Hall**

Present: **Councillors**
J Lortie (Chair)
A Craven
L Hardy
A Joyce

In Attendance: Catherine Horsley (Town Clerk & RFO)
Daryl Pearce (Deputy Town Clerk) – Minute taker

Public Participation

There were 5 members of the public present, none of whom wished to speak.

FA 24/53 To Receive and Accept apologies for absence (LGA 1972 s85 (1))

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs Sowry-House and Florek who both had prior commitments and Cllr Papilio who was unwell.

The Terms of Reference states quorum shall be three or at least one-third of its members, whichever is greater in accordance with Standing Order no. 4d viii.

FA 24/54 To Record any declarations of interest Members to declare any interests, including Disclosable Pecuniary Interests they may have in agenda items that accord with the requirements of the Town Council's Code of Conduct and to consider any prior requests from members for Dispensations that accord with Localism Act 2011 s33(b-e) (NB this does not preclude any later declarations)

There were no declarations of interest.

FA 24/55 Paper A - To Approve minutes of meeting held on 19 November 2024 LGA 1972, sch 12, para 41

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2024 were **APPROVED**.

FA 24/56 Paper B – To Approve Accounts for Payment

Members raised the following queries:

- Lines 875-880 and 895-899: What period did the utilities relate to. The Clerk explained the Waterplus invoices related to the monthly water usage charges across all sites, noting 75% of the Council Office and Village Hall charges would be reimbursed by the Village Hall Charity to the Town Council. The SSE invoices related to streetlighting across all sites from May to November 2024 as a result of a complaint raised with the Energy Ombudsman's and SSE reissuing invoices.

The Accounts for payment totalling £13,599.62 were **APPROVED**.

FA 24/57

Paper C - To Receive and Note the Budget Monitoring Report for the quarter ended 31 December 2024

The Clerk presented the report, noting due to the timing of the meeting and distributing the summons and papers prior to 30 December 2024, the budget monitoring report was not available. However, the Clerk reported there was a predicted underspend up to 31 December 2024 with comments noted as follows:

- Employees salaries underspend due to reduced grounds team.
- Recreation costs underspend due to efficiency savings and lower than anticipated contractor costs.
- Bank interest income was higher than anticipated due to Bank of England Base Rate.
- Sports provision and pavilion lounge income was higher than anticipated.
- Increased expenditure due in Quarter 4 2024/25 for outstanding exceptional and capital work item costs.

The Clerk concluded; the Town Council was in a strong financial position up to 31 December 2024. However, the Council's general reserves were at the higher limit of the recommended amount to hold of between 3-6 months operating costs.

The update for the quarter ending 31 December 2024 was **NOTED**.

FA 24/58

Paper D - To Consider draft Budget and Precept for the 2025/26 financial year for recommendation to Full Council

The Clerk presented the proposed budget for the 2025/26 financial year, highlighting the cost centres with a predicted underspend at the end of the 2024/25 financial year, with comments noted as follows:

- Predicted expenditure underspend of £99,749.78.
- Predicted increased income variance of £41,727.42.
- Total predicted underspend for the 2024/25 financial year is circa £141,477.20 based on forecasted income and expenditure from December 2024 to March 2025.
- Options 2 and 3 provided an amount to be used from the Council's general reserves to reduce the level of precept.
- Due to the predicted underspend, the Clerk recommended allocating any remaining underspend following the 2024/25 financial year end processing to the pavilion refurbishment/rebuild earmarked reserves.

The Chair talked through the draft 2025/26 financial year budget by cost code for the benefit of new committee members providing some background and context. Members challenged some of the proposed budget levels against the predicted underspend in the 2024/25 financial year. The Chair and Clerk provided further clarity and reassurance to enable members to make a recommendation to the Full Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend approval to Full Council to set the Corfe Mullen Town Council annual budget for 2025/26 financial year at £699,663.00.

Members then discussed the level of precept required from Dorset Council to cover the 2025/26 budget and the effect of any increase on those who pay Council Tax, with members acknowledging the cost-of-living crisis, alongside the Town Council's responsibility to provide services within the community and level of general reserves held.

Cllr Craven proposed option 3, an increase of 8.15%. This was seconded by Cllr Lortie. Members voted with the Chair having the casting vote.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council to set the precept at £609,663.00, an increase of 8.15%, which would see a Band D property increasing from £138.64 to £149.94 per annum with £90,000 of general reserves used to reduce the deficit.

FA 24/59 Matters for forthcoming agendas No decisions can be taken¹

There were no matters for forthcoming agendas.

FA 24/60 To Agree a date and time for the next meeting – Tuesday 8 April 2025 at 19:00 in the Small Hall of the Village Hall, Towers Way, Corfe Mullen.

FA 24/61 Close of Meeting at 20:46

Signed as a correct record of the meeting.....Date.....

DRAFT

¹ Councils cannot lawfully decide items of business which are not specified in the summons/agenda (LGA1972 sch 12, paras 10(2)(b) and Longfield Parish Council v Wright (1918) 88 LJ Ch 119)