

## Snodland Town Council – Policy and Resources

2 December 2021

Committee Members present:	Ms D King (VC), Mrs S Bell, P Hickmott, D Lettington, W Mallard
Other Councillors present:	Cllr A Bennison
Council Staff Present:	Mrs K Sowten (CEO)
Members of the public:	None

1.	<p><u>Apologies for absence</u></p> <p>Cllrs J Butterfield (C), Mrs S Shaw</p> <p>Cllr Ms Alford Smith Chaired the meeting in the absence of the Chairman</p>
2.	<p><u>Declaration of Interests</u></p>
3.	<p><u>Minutes - To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2021</u></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on the 26<sup>th</sup> August 2021 were agreed as a true record</p>
4.	<p><u>Questions from the Public</u></p> <p><i>Pursuant to Standing Order 3 e &amp; g Members of the public may make representation, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda. A member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes</i></p> <p>There were no members of the public present</p>
5.	<p><u>Audit Trail to be given by a Councillor</u></p> <p>Cllr Hickmott completed an audit trail relating to cemetery income. Upon inspection of the cemetery folder he reported that the current way in which the income from Clients was recorded was not clear enough. Since this inspection the CEO has already implemented new procedures to ensure that all Cemetery income is invoiced to the client, regardless of whether they pay when they send in their application. If this is the case the invoice will state that payment has been received in full. The Chairman suggested that a further audit was carried out next year to check on the progress of the procedures.</p>
6.	<p><u>Financial Review</u></p> <p>A copy of the financial review was sent out to members of the committee prior to the meeting, a copy is available on file. The CEO advised that the nominal codes within Brooklands Café and Lake utility income has been split to read water income and electricity income and adjusted the budget accordingly. The overall budget amount has not changed it has just been split between the water and electric nominal codes.</p> <p>A Councillor asked why there was no budget for Devonshire Rooms Pre-school. The CEO advised that the income was recorded under Hall Hire income. The income and expenditure codes are purely for equipment purchased that is re-imbursed by the pre-school.</p>

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<p><b>0800</b></p> <p><b>0801</b></p> <p><b>0802</b></p>	<p>The lease for the pre-school will be changed to a licence in due course. This is currently being monitored due to covid limitations on use.</p> <p>The CEO advised that the Unity Trust bank account was now open and money needed to be transferred into the new account and all the existing direct debits transferred over to enable the account to be used as the Councils general banking account.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b> to authorise the CEO to transfer funds into the Unity bank to enable the account to be utilised.</p> <p>The Current credit limit on the Councils credit card needs to be have an increased credit limit as the current limit of £500 is not a viable amount for ongoing purchases.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b> to increase the limit on the Council Credit Card to £1500. Any expenditure over £500 should be agreed by the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Council or Policy and Resources. The new procedures to be updated in our current financial regulations.</p> <p>One of the computers in the office is due for renewal and in line with current protocols and procedures it was suggested that a laptop would be a better option to purchase. This would enable work to be carried out in any part of the building, for home working or online working if the existing Laptop is being used by another member of staff</p> <p>Our existing Computer consultant has provided competitive pricing for a new laptop of £882.50 plus VAT.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b> to purchase a new laptop from our existing Computer Consultant at £882.50 plus VAT</p>
7.	<p><u>Draft Budget</u></p> <p>A copy of the budget and report had been circulated to the Councillors prior to the meeting, a copy is available on file.</p> <p>Changes reflected in this year's budget have been explained in the budget notes with the major changes detailed below –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salary increases for 21/22 (not yet agreed by NJC) and 2022/23. An increase of 3% has been allocated. The budget has also made allowances for two new part time members of staff, to replace those leaving.</li> <li>• Other staffing costs have also been increased to include a Community engagement officer (see separate document under Agenda item 7.1).</li> <li>• Insurance increase of 15%.</li> <li>• Devonshire Rooms gas contract huge increase due to the current climate.</li> <li>• Mowing – Now in-house. Budget now allows for replacement small hand mowers and strimmer's and contract services for the Hedge cutting.</li> <li>• Firework Display –Additional cost for security staff.</li> <li>• Queens Jubilee cost for Town celebrations (Currently under the heading of Boundary Walk will be renamed).</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snodland Partnership Grant contribution re-introduced this year.</li> </ul> <p>The budget for 2022/23 leads to an increase in the precept from £325816 to 328561 an increase of just under 1%</p> <p>The level of band D equivalent during the current year 2021/22 is £84.15 with its tax base of 3871.98. The 2022/23 tax base has yet to be confirmed by TMBC and therefore the increase is based on the current year 3871.98.</p> <p>2021/22 £325816/3871.98 =£84.15 2022/23 £328561/3871.98 = £84.86</p> <p>An increase on band D properties of 71p</p> <p>The Council accepted the draft budget, which will be re-presented once the new tax base has been received from TMBC.</p>
7.1	<p><u>To consider working in Partnership with TMBC and Clarion Futures on a Community Engagement initiative</u></p> <p>The CEO reported on an initiative that had been put forward from TMBC and Clarion regarding the introduction of a Community Engagement support officer similar to the project currently put forward for Tonbridge Trench area. The service would involve engagement and support to build positive relationships with residents living in Snodland. This would be a joint project with Tonbridge and East Malling. The details of the scheme need to be discussed in further detail as Councillors were unsure of the exact requirements being put forward for Snodland. There were also concerns that this may be a duplicate of services already available by other housing associations.</p> <p><b>0803 RESOLVED</b> to set up a meeting between TMBC, Clarion Futures and Councillor representatives to discuss the Community Engagement initiative further.</p>
8.	<p><u>Damages deposit bonds</u></p> <p>The CEO presented details of damaged bonds that had not been collected by hall hirers who had previously hired the facilities and were unable to be contacted to return the deposits.</p> <p>The CEO advised that the hire agreement needed to be changed to instruct that deposits should be made by BACS and would be repaid by BACS. Any deposits made in cash and not collected within 6 months would be donated to the Council's chosen charity.</p> <p><b>0804 RESOLVED</b> to donate the uncollected damages deposits to the councils current chosen Christmas Charity, DAVSS.</p> <p><b>0805 RESOLVED</b> to extend the chosen charity to include this year as no decision on a charity was made last year because of the Covid Pandemic which is a continuation from the previous year's chosen charity.</p>

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0806	<p><b>RESOLVED</b> to amend the hire agreement to instruct that damage deposit payment should be made by BACS, however if received in cash and not collected within 6 months the money would be donated to the councils chosen charity.</p>
9.	<p><u>Audit review KCC</u></p> <p>The Internal Audit report had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. A copy of the report is available on file.</p> <p>The CEO reported on the issues that were identified -</p> <p>Issue 1 – High bank balances exceeding the level protected by the FSCS scheme The Council is currently retaining all reserves in a savings account, the balance for this account is high and is significantly above the £85,000 protected by the FSCS scheme. Consideration should be given to researching alternative banking or investment options which would provide greater security and returns for the Council.</p> <p>The CEO reported that a new bank account had now been set up with Unity Trust as per the resolution at Full Council held on 28 October 2021. Consideration for investment options will be discussed under Agenda Item 11.</p> <p>Issue 2 – Request to waive Financial Regulations The Financial Regulations have not been fully followed in respect of the purchase of the grass cutting equipment and new tractor. The three quotes process was used rather than advertising the opportunity of a Public Supply Contract. The eventual total cost of the purchase was £44,925.00. Following discussions between the CEO and Internal Audit, they understood that the value of the purchase was originally expected to be much lower than the final amount spent due to an initial understanding that only a mower attachment needed to be purchased to attach to the existing tractor, it was subsequently identified during the quotes process that a new tractor would also need to be purchased. Due to time constraints the Council did not advertise on the contract finder website.</p>
0807	<p><b>RESOLVED</b> that the council should have minuted for the council to waive financial regulations in relation to the Procurement process regarding purchases over £25,000.</p> <p>Progress on Previous Issues Raised From Visit 2 2020/21 - The Council Risk Assessment has not yet been updated to include the risk of cyber-enabled crime (Partially resolved). The CEO advised that all staff are aware and alert to the potential for receiving phishing and scam emails, a suitable online cyber security training session has been identified however staff have not yet undertaken this.</p>
0808	<p><b>RESOLVED</b> to ensure that online training is provided and the Council's Risk Assessment is updated to include the risk of cyber-enabled crime.</p>

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	A Councillor commended the CEO on work carried out to ensure that the audit was completed satisfactorily.
10.	<p><u>Insurance Renewal</u></p> <p>The insurance renewal for 2021 was due on 14 November 2021. There was a delay from the insurers in getting the renewal prices to the council meaning that the documentation and prices were not available for an appropriate council meeting.</p> <p>As previously agreed the CEO was given delegated powers to accept the renewal and discussed the renewal prices with the Vice Chairman of Policy and Resources and the Chairman of the Council.</p> <p>Computer &amp; Cyber policy - £1049.62          Combined policy - £16410.45 There may be a slight decrease now that the grass mowing equipment is in a secure garage.          Massey Ferguson Tractor insurance - £495.62          Vehicle Insurance - £2152.61</p> <p><b>0809 RESOLVED</b> to retrospectively accept the total insurance costs of £20108.30 for 2021.</p>
11.	<p><u>To consider investment in CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund</u></p> <p>The CEO presented a report on the CCLA public Sector Deposit Fund (Copy of file). The Internal Audit identified the need to consider splitting our reserves into separate funds.</p> <p>A Councillor asked how much of our funds were for Earmarked and Capital funds and how quickly the funds were required and whether it is a possible to consider housing portfolio funds. It was felt that the Public Sector Deposit fund was the most suitable option It is a cash based, AAA rated, money market fund (MMF) with daily dealing and access to cash. The fund is low risk, provides good liquidity and good yield. There is a high level of diversification in this fund and only top quality credit rated organisations are used. There is an initial deposit of £25k but this amount can be withdrawn to zero and the account used as and when required. Interest is paid monthly on this account. The current return on the PSDF has a better return than current bank interest rates.</p> <p><b>RECOMMEND</b> to invest our current Earmarked and Capital reserves of £420412 in CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund.</p>
12.	<p><u>To consider a request from the Police and TMBC to run some monthly 'drop in' surgeries for residents at the Town Council Offices once a month.</u></p> <p>The Council have been approached by TMBC to request use of the Council Offices for a Monthly drop in surgery for the police. Councillors asked if the surgeries were going to be advertised to residents and will TMBC be signposted residents to other agencies to help them with their queries. The</p>

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<b>0810</b>	CEO advised that the initial enquiry was just to ask for permission to use the Town Council building and that further information would follow. <b>RESOLVED</b> to allow the police and TMBC to run drop in surgeries for residents at the Town Council Offices once a month.
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There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.28 pm.