

BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held remotely via Zoom Video-Conferencing on Wednesday 25th November 2020 at 7.15pm

Present:

Councillors:

S Barlow (Deputy Chair)
C Baines
J Buckley
D Cooper
G Davies
C Dyson
H Howell
E Marshall
K Sawbridge
C Whittle
R Whittle

In Attendance:

L Jakeman, Town Clerk
R Williams, Responsible Financial Officer
A Kendrick, PA to the Town Clerk

(Note: There were 5 members of the public in attendance)

0159/2021 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

R Fox
K Hurst-Knight
S Stevens
C Walden

0160/2021 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Nil

0161/2021 **BUDGET PREPARATION 2021/2022**

The topic had been deferred from the previous Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 17th November. Members considered the report from the RFO (circulated for the previous meeting) which included a number of draft budgets.

The RFO provided a verbal update on financial matters affecting the budget (including the announcement earlier in the day by the Government with regard to a public sector pay freeze) and provided some context in relation to the budget (e.g. no carnival funding included, intention to keep the Town Hall closed in 2021).

Members were invited to provide comments regarding budget aspirations in general (e.g. levels of reserve desired, levels of precept increase, the need/desire for certain services) in addition comments regarding particular budget line entries were encouraged.

A wide range of topics were discussed or comments made, including:

- Desired percentage levels of tax increase (the views were varied)
- Potential for disposal of assets that were losing money (e.g. Castle Hall)
- Review staffing cost predictions in light of pay freeze.
- Remove funding in hospitality and Civic and Ceremonial budgets.
- Maintaining a suitable level of general reserve
- Consider this year's impact on the finances in isolation but with consideration with the 5 year forward budget.
- There is uncertainty about the level of Council Tax Base which will likely put upward pressure on the percentage level of taxation.
- Concern that Bridgnorth residents paying for items that also benefit residents in neighbouring parishes.
- A review of some budget line entries to understand increases proposed.
- Currently there are many variables that can have an impact and the Council should not rush to set its budget.

Notes were taken of individual comments and the RFO would look to shape future draft budgets with those in mind.

Members were invited to submit further comments to the RFO after the meeting (via email or letter).