



Newark TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MINUTES

Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Wednesday 17th January 2024 in the Committee Room, at the Town Hall.

Membership Present:	Councillor	B Corrigan (Chairman)
	Councillors	P Ball I Brown D Campbell T Collier E Cropper S Crosby S Dickinson (Ap) L Geary J Kellas D Ledger (Ap) D Moore (Vice-Chairman) G Rix N Ross L Roulstone M Skinner M Spoor (Ap) P Taylor
Apologies for Absence:	Councillors	S Dickinson, D Ledger, M Spoor
Officers Present:	Town Clerk	Matthew Gleadell
Taking Notes:	Executive Assistant	Helen Crossland
	There was one member of the public and one member of the press present.	
Venue:	Committee Room, Newark Town Hall	

FGP70/23/24 Minutes of the last meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Wednesday 22nd November 2023

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Wednesday 22nd November 2023 were proposed by Cllr B Corrigan, seconded by Cllr N Ross. A vote was held and they were **AGREED** with the following amendment:

FGP62/23/24 – Kidney Stones

Para 15:

Cllr B Corrigan then proposed 'Newark Town Council is willing to consider this in principle but would want more details about where they would be sited and what security measure would be in place, before they make the decision and that N&SDC should meet all costs involved.'

FGP71/23/24 Declarations of Interest

It was **AGREED** to accept any Declarations of Interest as and when they arose during the meeting.

FGP72/23/24 Monthly Payment Schedule 08/24 & 9/24

Cllr B Corrigan proposed, and Cllr D Moore seconded the Monthly Payment Schedules 08/24 and 09/24

Members **NOTED** Payment Schedule 08/24 in the sum of £228,633.52 (two hundred and twenty eight thousand, six hundred and thirty three pounds and 52p) and Payment Schedule 09/24 in the sum of £179,168.59 (one hundred and seventy nine thousand, one hundred and sixty eight pounds and 59p).

FGP73/23/24 Revenue Budget & Precept 2024/2025

The Chairman asked Members to **NOTE** an error on page 27 of the Agenda Item. Paragraph 4 *'The attached budget shows a shortfall of income against expenditure of £35,121.00' - this figure should read **£20,121.00**.*

Debate then followed with regard to the draft budget as presented to Members by the Town Clerk.

Concern was raised that some of the proposals were too conservative regarding income – Town Hall Hire fees, and the Town Hall Bar.

It was also **NOTED** that certain costs had been included, in anticipation of new staff being hired (previously reported) to deal with bookings in the Town Hall.

Members felt that Town Hall Hire fees should be raised by enough to cover those costs.

Allotment rents – the forecast was less than the 'actual' for last year – more should be put into this (£500). Various discounts on allotments were also discussed – the Town Clerk was asked to check if any increase had been allowed for in the budget figures.

The Chairman pointed out that there were some difficult decisions to make; with

increased costs, reducing income and forecast housing income was nowhere near what had been expected.

Looking at an 11% increase, from the papers presented, it does not include anything in the R & R Fund.

The choice would be to either increase income and reduce costs, or a combination of both.

The Chairman suggested that Members look at other income before deciding on an increase in the precept.

More discussion followed which included having a detailed business plan for the Town Hall, which would include events and bar costings. It was agreed that more data would be required from other businesses for this.

Another member of the public joined the meeting at this point.

Cllr L Geary proposed that the budget for Town Hall Hire Fees should be raised by £25,000; this was seconded by Cllr B Corrigan and **AGREED**.

The Town Clerk reported that he had already increased the Cemetery Income by £15,000 since the meeting last week. He pointed out to Members that he was looking at a 4 year timescale with the figures, not just next year.

The following was proposed:

£5,000 increased income on Plinths

Increase allotments income to £10,000.

Increase Cemetery fees income by £5,000.

The Chairman said that with the above in mind, this would now give a £15,000 surplus, not a £20,000 deficit.

Debate then moved to the proposed rise in the precept of 11%. There was a long discussion about the actual amount of money that people would have to pay, to put into context the 11% increase.

The Town Clerk informed Members that he fully understood the concerns, but if there was no increase this year, Councillors would be delaying the pain – he was trying to spread the pain over the next few years.

The Chairman asked the Town Clerk to update the budget with the things that had been agreed at this meeting, and proposed that the conversation about the precept be deferred to the meeting of the Full Town Council next week. This was seconded by Cllr D Moore and **AGREED**.

The Chairman then invoked Standing Order 4 (4) to allow the meeting to continue for another 30 minutes.

FGP74/23/24 External Audit 22/23 and Internal Audit 23/24

It was proposed by Cllr B Corrigan, seconded by Cllr D Moore that the results of the 22/23 External Audit be **NOTED**.

A vote was held and this was **AGREED**.

Cllr L Geary declared a non-pecuniary interest as she was now employed by Lincolnshire County Council.

Cllr B Corrigan proposed, Cllr G Rix seconded that subject to advice from the Councils accountant confirming that no accounting difficulties arise, the transfer of shares from the CCLA Doris Bainbridge Investment Account to the CCLA

Property Fund Investment Account was **APPROVED** so as to put the Doris Bainbridge account into the correct financial position as explained in the Agenda Report.

A vote was held and this was **AGREED**.

Cllr B Corrigan proposed, Cllr G Rix seconded that Assurance Lincs be appointed to undertake the 23/24 Internal Audit on the basis of the Agenda Report.

A vote was held and this was **AGREED**.

FGP75/23/24 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Cllr B Corrigan proposed, Cllr D Moore seconded, that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972) the press and public be excluded from the next Agenda Item debate on the grounds that the Committee's remaining business involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, and the public interest in disclosing the information.

The members of the public and press left the meeting.

FGP76/23/24 Tolney Lane Land

The Town Clerk went through the Agenda Report. He pointed out that there could be risks if this land were to be disposed of.

Discussion then followed with regard to either leasing the land or selling it. Some concerns were raised about the possible inappropriate use of the land.

Some Members thought it would be better to sell the land then the Town Council would no longer have the responsibility for it.

Other Members agreed with the principle of leasing the land.

The Town Clerk was asked to investigate both of the options above, and to bring another report back to this Committee for further discussion.

Members **CONSIDERED** the exploration of forms of disposal of the land identified in the Agenda Report.

Meeting Closed:	9.30pm	Next Meeting:	Wednesday 14th February 2024
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