

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee
held in the Town Hall on Wednesday 11 December 2024**

Present Councillor G Ward
Councillors S Abbott, J Brook, A Brown, T Ellis and R Hopkinson

In Attendance Mrs M Jones (Head of Finance and Administration)
D Martin (Chief Executive)

F&A 27/24 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor A Jones.

F&A 28/24 Public Question Time and Petitions

Representatives of two organisations attended the meeting in person and asked the Committee to support their grant applications.

F&A 29/24 Declarations of Interest

To receive any Declaration(s) of Interest under Corsham Town Council's Code of Conduct issued in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

Councillor G Ward declared a non-pecuniary interest in *Agenda Item - 5 Grant Application for The Brunel Shed* as a trustee of the Almshouses because The Brunel Shed volunteers were doing work at the Almshouses. He stayed in the room during the discussion and decision on the item.

Councillor J Brook declared a non-pecuniary interest in *Agenda Item - 5 Grant Application for The Brunel Shed* as a representative of Potley and Pockeridge Community Association where The Brunel Shed is based. He stayed in the room during the discussion and decision on the item.

F&A 30/24 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Finance and Administration Committee meeting held on 23 October 2024

There were no matters arising.

F&A 31/24 Grant Applications (Fifth Round)

Two grant applications were considered.

Resolved

- i) That Rewired Counselling be awarded £500 towards the cost of SPARK, a full-day mental, emotional and physical health event for young people (Year 13) in conjunction with The Corsham School and Pound Arts.
- ii) That The Brunel Shed be awarded £750 towards the cost of providing a public access defibrillator on the exterior wall of the Pockeridge and Potley Community Centre (Section 137 expenditure)

F&A 32/24 Detailed Income and Expenditure Accounts (including the Town Hall)

The Committee reviewed and noted the Income and Expenditure Accounts, Financial Report and the breakdown of Earmarked Reserves.

F&A 33/24 Draft Budget 2025/26

Further to previous meetings the Committee considered the budget report with a view to making a recommendation to the Full Council on the 2025/26 budget and precept.

A few budget items had been reduced or removed as they were no longer required or reliant on using earmarked reserves. There were some new/increased budgets, which were aimed towards delivery of the Strategic Plan 2022-2026. The main budget changes, service developments and projects included in the draft budget were as follows:

Committee/Item	Proposed 2025/26
Finance and Administration/General	
<i>Revenue</i>	
Grant – Methuen Hall	£63,450
Neighbourhood Planning	£35,000
Grants – General	£12,000
Grants – Pound Arts Centre	£10,000
Strategic Plan Delivery	£10,000
Corsham Windband Association	£2,500
Environmental Projects*	£15,000
Property and Amenities Committee	
Item	
<i>Revenue</i>	
Parking Initiatives	£76,667
Service Delegation and Asset Transfer	£20,000
<i>Capital</i>	
Skate Park	£75,000
New Workshop	£50,000
Transport Schemes	£40,000
Railway Station	£30,000
Grounds Maintenance Equipment	£18,180
Building Contingency*	£85,000

Asset Management*	£40,000
Play Area Improvements*	£30,000
BMX/Pump Track*	£25,000
Public Realm Improvements*	£19,312

Methuen Hall

Revenue

Repairs and Maintenance	£33,000
Town Hall Improvements	£10,000

Community Services Committee

Revenue

Youth Activities	£25,440
Fete/Events	£12,750
Destination Marketing	£15,000
Corsham Youth Zone	£10,000
Health/Wellbeing Initiatives	£7,500
Health and Wellbeing Grants	£7,000
Christmas Lights	£7,420
Creative Corsham	£5,000

Note: Items marked * are funded from earmarked reserves.

The allowance for income from Section 106 Agreements had been left at £0 in 2025/26. Projected income from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) had been increased from £20,000 to £45,000.

In 2023 the Strategic Planning Working Group had discussed reports on the capital programme and future funding, with emphasis on the most appropriate use of resources to deliver the Town Council's Strategic Plan priorities. This included a plan to use earmarked reserves and CIL income over three years. The draft budget broadly reflected this.

Financial Implications

The Town Council's overall draft budget showed an increase in spend of £183,635 excluding use of earmarked reserves in both years. The precept increase would be £106,547 (8.68%). However, the decrease in the number of Band D Equivalent properties by 1.8 increased the figure to 8.72% per property. The overall Band D Equivalent charge would increase from £247.22 to £268.78 (an increase of £21.56 per year or just over 41p per week).

Should the Council approve the budget as detailed in the 'DRAFT FOR 2025/26' column in the 'Annual Budget by Committee' report, the overall Council budget would be £1,573,948 (excluding allocated earmarked reserves). The precept for 2025/26 would be £1,333,847.

Legal Implications

None.

Environmental and Community Safety Implications

The proposals would contribute towards the Town Council's Strategic Plan priorities. The funds were also necessary to maintain the Council's assets in safe and decent order. The Town Council had declared a climate emergency and ecological emergency and was implementing a Climate Action Plan and producing a Biodiversity Action Plan.

Resolved

That the draft budget proposals and precept for 2025/26 be approved for consideration by the Full Council, with a budget of £1,573,948 (excluding allocated earmarked reserves) and a precept of £1,333,847.

F&A 34/24 Internal Audit Report (First Interim) 2024/25

A copy of the report from the interim visit had been circulated. There were no recommendations arising from the report.

Resolved

That the Internal Audit Report (First Interim) 2024/25 be endorsed.

F&A 35/24 Staffing

Further to the August Committee meeting, the Chief Executive provided a verbal update on staffing matters aimed at ensuring good business continuity and effective recruitment and development of the Town Council team.

The Chief Executive explained that the Head of Finance and Administration would be retiring at the end of March 2025 and gave an update on progress to recruit her replacement. He also gave an update on a separate staffing matter and asked that a smaller group be formed to discuss and be consulted on any decisions needed.

Resolved

- i) That the Head of Finance and Administration be thanked for her hard work and that progress with recruiting her replacement be noted.
- ii) That a group comprised of the Town Council Chair and Vice-Chair, Committee Chair and Vice-Chair, along with Councillor R Hopkinson be formed to support the Chief Executive on current confidential staffing matters.

The meeting commenced at 7.00pm and closed at 7.55pm. There were two members of the public present at the start of the meeting and none at the end.

CHAIR

DATE