



MINUTES of a meeting of the Finance and Operations Committee held on Thursday 7th November 2024 at 7.00pm in the Council Committee Room, 4 York Road, Torpoint.

PRESENT: - Councillor Mrs. J M Martin (Chairman), Councillor G J Davis (Town Mayor), Councillor Mrs. K Brownhill (Deputy Town Mayor), Councillors Mrs. S G Bickle, D S Phipps, M J Spurling and J Tivnan BEM plus the Town Clerk & RFO (Clerk) and Operations Manager in attendance. The Town Council Support Officer was also in attendance.

ALSO PRESENT: - Councillors Miss R A Evans BEM, L E Keise, Mrs. J L Reeves and C R Still were present for agenda items 1 – 4 inclusive (until the meeting was Adjourned).

	ACTION
<p>74-24F&O Apologies for absence Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs. L Fellows, Mrs. C E Goodman, C R Sawyer, B A Walsh and R M Willoughby.</p>	
<p>75-24F&O Declarations of Interest relating to items on the Agenda a) An NRI (Non-Registerable Interest) was declared by: - Councillor Mrs. K Brownhill – (Agenda item 3. Hiring and Letting Charges as a Member of the RBL and as a hirer for and on behalf of U3A. b) An NRI (Non-Registerable Interest) was declared by: - Councillor J Tivnan BEM – (Agenda item 3. Hiring and Letting Charges as Treasurer of the Royal British Legion [Storage Room York Road]) and anything related to Remembrance.) c) An NRI (Non-Registerable Interest) was declared by: - Councillor L E Keise – (Agenda item 15b Grant application Torpoint AFC as Chairman of Torpoint AFC). d) An NRI (Non-Registerable Interest) was declared by: - The Chairman (Councillor Mrs. J M Martin) – (Agenda item 3. Hiring and Letting Charges as a relative of the proprietor of the Coppola School of Performing Arts, also Andy Martin Production Support.)</p>	
<p>76-24F&O Prior to commencement of the discussions, the Town Clerk reminded members: Under Section 106 of the Local Government Act, any Member who has unpaid council tax over 2 months old, must declare the fact at the meeting and is not allowed to vote on budget/council tax setting agenda item.</p>	
<p>77-24F&O To consider the Hiring and Letting Charges for the 2025-26 financial year. The Clerk detailed, the information from Cornwall Council regarding the council tax base for the 2025-26 financial year, which was officially due to be circulated to all councils by the end of the following day. The Excel spreadsheet, received from Cornwall Council, enables Town</p>	

and Parish Councils, having input the proposed precept first, to display the annual council tax charge that residents in the parish will pay in 2025-26 for the parish council element, based on the proposed precept figure that has been input. This is shown for all of the different property bands. The spreadsheet then displays the increase or decrease in charge per band from 2024-25 to 2025-26 in pounds (£) and percentage (%) terms.

The Clerk explained that for the financial year 2025-26 the council tax base will include a 'double charge' for all second homes. [Cornwall Council approved the introduction of the premium from April 2025 at its meeting on 12th January 2023, this was reaffirmed at the [Cornwall] Council meeting on 20th February 2024 following the Levelling Up Regeneration Act receiving Royal Assent.]

The introduction of the second homes premium will have the impact of increasing the council tax base and in effect, for each second home that currently counts as one dwelling in the taxbase, it will count as two from April 2025. For Torpoint, the Clerk had received information from Cornwall Council, which indicated: -

- For council tax Band D - there is the equivalent of 14 second homes;
- The number of households in receipt of council tax support has increased.

The overall result of these changes for 2025/26 is a **decrease in the council tax base for Torpoint**, by 0.1%.

The Clerk had circulated in advance an initial budget/precept proposal for council to consider and review at this meeting, which suggested that room hire charges for the Council Chambers and Bénodet Park should remain the same for 2025/26.

Members also considered these proposals to increase the licence fees for the licensees and a very lengthy debate ensued. In line with previous years' the individual room valuations, from the report conducted in November 2021, were increased by 5%.

It is **recommended** that the notes appended to these minutes containing the proposed hiring and licensee charges at *Appendix 1* are kept the same for the hire of rooms: -

Council Hall – £18.00 per hour

Committee Room – £12.00 per hour

Mayor's Parlour - from £8.00 per hour for the 2025-26 financial year.

Bénodet Park tea hut and Park

Hourly charge – £12.00 per hour

Half day charge - £35.00

Full day charge - £70.00 for the 2025-26 financial year.

All licensees charges for 2025/26 are as per *Appendix 1*.

Council

78-24F&O To consider the Council Budget for the 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28 financial years.

The Chairman (Councillor Mrs. J M Martin) explained that preparatory work had been

undertaken to prepare a draft budget, as previously circulated and now updated, for the 2025-26 financial year, with hard copies available at the meeting.

The Clerk sought members approval to review the planned salaries expenditure for 2025/26, with the changes announced in the Autumn 2024 budget - the increase to Employers National Insurance contributions. The Clerk added, the correct information about the backdated pay award for 2024/25 was also now known. This would result in the salaries expenditure budget increasing from £330,280 in 2024-25, to £356,019 in 2025-26, an increase of £25,739 (7.7% increase). Using the draft budget, Members debated at length where savings could be made and income could be generated.

All income amounts were reviewed, as well as the planned allocated Reserves considerations for 2025-26.

The Clerk showed members the revised precept calculation using the Cornwall Council Excel spreadsheet, which amounts to a 8.05% increase, for a Band D property, to the precept for 2025-26. Following a proposal by the Chairman (Councillor Mrs. J M Martin), which was seconded by the Town Mayor (Councillor G J Davis) it is **recommended** that the notes appended to these minutes containing a balanced Council budget for the financial year 2025-26 at *Appendix 2* are approved by the Town Council.

Based on the proposed budget, this would result in an increase from the existing precept of £462,799, rising to a proposed precept of **£499,446**, an increase of £36,647, using the tax base for 2025-26 this is approximately a 8.05% increase, with the monthly charge of £211.16 for a Band "D" property, which is an increase of £15.72.

(Prior to the voting on the proposed council budget / precept for the financial year 2025-26. Members were asked by the Town Clerk: Under Section 106 of the Local Government Act, any Member who has unpaid council tax over 2 months old, must declare the fact at the meeting and is not allowed to vote on budget/council tax setting agenda item.)

Council

79-24F&O Adjournment of the meeting

It was **resolved** to Adjourn the meeting to 7.00pm on Monday 11th November 2024, council committee room, to consider the remaining agenda items.

Meeting closed at 9.23pm.