

Minute of EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL meeting held in Plas Pentwyn, Castle Road, Coedpoeth on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at 7.00pm – 9.00pm.

### **PRESENT**

Cllrs: B Brown (Chairman), V Jones, S Edwards, L Van Ryswyk, Y McCarrol, A Wedlake, G Price, G Kelly, Gr Kelly.

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Mrs V Bolton – Community Council Clerk, Mr N Acott – Temporary Locum Clerk Associate

### **APOLOGIES**

Cllr P Wilson, S Scheurleer.

### **53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None declared. A Member also sought guidance on procedure for recorded vote and Locum provide details accordingly.

### **54. WELCOME**

Chairman and fellow Councillors gave a warm welcome to Mrs Vicky Bolton, Clerk to Council who had recently been appointed Clerk to Council.

### **55. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED** That Public and Press be excluded in accordance with Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 and Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A during following items: Budget Proposals 2022/3/4 including Financial /Management/ Personnel and Contracts.

Proposer: Cllr B Brown    Seconder: Cllr Gr Kelly

### **56. FINANCIAL RESERVES 2022/3**

Details of budget showing last year's budget estimates, probable/actual income and expenditure 2022/23 and future budget proposals 2023/24 had been circulated with agenda.

Several Councillors had queried last year's budget setting process (remote meeting) and expressed concern about high level of reserves earmarked to balance accounts in 2022/23. Locum Clerk explained that such an approach was unusual but not unknown. He also speculated that situation may have arisen due to low income levels from rental of community buildings during covid pandemic. However, Council's auditors had previously highlighted the low level of reserves being held by Council given its size and level of services provided.

Unfortunately, the financial situation has also changed dramatically over last twelve months as energy costs for footway lighting have risen by over 300%, and the general inflation figure in November 2022 is 11.1% (source Office of National Statistics). Several ongoing personnel issues, and a high level of outstanding building maintenance work was also impacting upon Council's limited financial resources. Such unexpected events and activities clearly demonstrated the importance of ensuring Council must hold a satisfactory level of financial reserves in future years.

In response to questions about individual liabilities the Locum Clerk explained that Council was a corporate body and therefore was corporately responsible for its actions.

Discussions ensued regarding a satisfactory level of Council reserve funds to be held and there was a consensus that eighty thousand pounds should be used as a working target figure, increasing to one hundred thousand pounds over next three/five years. Council would need to identify such funds within its budget proposals and can also amend banking arrangements to show reserves. Details of cash held in council bank accounts earlier today provided.

## **57. BUDGET PROPOSALS 2023/24**

Details of budget showing last year's budget estimates, probable/actual income and expenditure 2022/23 and future budget proposals 2023/24 had been circulated with agenda. A Council Tax Precept options paper had also been prepared for meeting tonight.

Locum Clerk Associate explained that the adverse economic climate had compounded an already difficult financial situation for the authority, and that a standstill budget option was not a financially viable option. In essence both income and expenditure would need significant change, and undoubtedly this would require a robust management and decision making process. Council then began its review of each budget line for both income and expenditure.

Income figures for parish hall and snooker/library had been forecast on assumption that both buildings would remain open to public. However, both buildings required significant and increasing levels of repair and maintenance. A full property survey was required to help ascertain building status as last survey was undertaken many years ago. Cemetery income had declined in 2022/23 following its closure to new burials due to the cemetery reaching its burial plot capacity.

Further discussion would also need to take place with Memorial Park Bowling Club about future use of bowling green, and other potential income lines would also need to be investigated including possible sale of land.

Expenditure was reviewed by Council and any significant changes and/or new service provision budget lines highlighted and explanations provided. In response to questions from Councillors members were informed that payroll figures included the recent pay award 2022/23, and a sum had also been included within 2023/24 payroll forecast. Chairman also reminded Council of ongoing discussions with employees regarding present payscales and actions being taken. An underlying inflation rate figure of 11.1% had been used for several fixed budget lines.

Following discussions, it was evident that Council would need to have several approaches to financial management including a review of income generation lines, actions to reduce expenditure, and seek a foundation upon which it could begin process of seeking external funds towards community development work and buildings renovation.

No proposal was received for budget proposals and/or setting of council tax precept at meeting tonight but Members had been made aware of Council's financial position and proposed scope of works and services for 2023/24. Council discussed need for a further meeting and Chairman advised this budget proposals would be included on agenda of forthcoming Full Council. Several Councillors requested that next meeting should also be held in Plas Pentwyn.

Chairman thanked Clerk and Locum Clerk Associate for good work and felt detail provided would enable an informed decision making process. It would not be an easy task, but members were prepared to accept challenge to ensure local residents and community receive support and services they deserve for Coedpoeth village.

Several actions were proposed and further budget proposal/council tax precept discussion would be included on forthcoming Full Council agenda.

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Confidential information removed

Chairman\_\_\_\_\_