

BRACKLA COMMUNITY COUNCIL



FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING 7 September 2020 at 6.30 pm Committee Room, Brackla Community Centre

Members Present
Cllr Keith Hughes (Chair)
Cllr David Aston
Cllr Ian Hibble
Cllr Tyler Walsh

Mrs R Keepins – Clerk of the Council
Mr P Ley – Assistant Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer
Miss H May – Admin Officer

1 Apologies for Absence
Cllr J Spanswick

2 Declarations of Interest
Cllr I Hibble declared a personal interest as a Civil Servant working for Welsh Government.

3 Annual Budget Review General and Earmarked Reserves

The Chair introduced the item, highlighting that part of what will be discussed under item 3 will also inform item 4.

The Responsible Finance Officer introduced the item to the Committee, stating that as indicated by the balance sheet, the Council started off the year with £44,095.00 in general reserves.

He continued, explaining that as shown by the year end predictions, and discussed at the Extraordinary meeting of Council in August, there are already commitments that have been made to come out of the reserves which total to around £15,200.00 this was the opportunity to reallocate the funds appropriately

as we know they are earmarked for 2020-21. It is also an opportunity to earmark any further funding from the reserves for expenditure in the current year.

Further to this the RFO advised that the Community Centre income for 2019-20 exceeded its expenditure by £6,152.00 and it is usually the case that this is put back into the Community Centre Reserve fund which would take this budget up to £31,000.00 (£6,000.00 added).

Members queried the £3,089.00 Election reserve budget, to which the RFO responded explaining that this is £3,000.00 for 2020-21 which will be added to the £3,089.00 from 2019-20 and again a further £3,000.00 will be added each year for 2021-22 and 2022-23 taking the fund up to £12,089.00 ready for the local elections in 2022. There is always a risk of a by-election during this time, however this could be mitigated by taking funds, if required, from general reserves or the Community Centre reserves and then adjusted once more during the next precept, which has been done in the past.

The RFO then said that in addition to the £15,200.00 there is also spending agreed for bins and benches in Brackla. The Chair advised that he had been looking into the subject of bins and whilst he was still awaiting a quote from BCBC, the quote he had received from a separate company was roughly £540.00 per bin which would have the BCC Logo on it. From his research it was apparent that there was a need for anywhere between 4 and 10 of these bins across Brackla so there was possibly a need for a budget of £5,000.00 to be earmarked for bins.

The Committee continued to discuss the issue with littering and bins being unemptied across Brackla by BCBC staff with agreement that whilst the small bins used to be fine when they were emptied every day, now that they were not meant they were not fit for purpose. There was also some confusion as to which bins BCBC had agreed to empty and when and whether this was being carried out.

On the subject of benches there was agreement that a commitment had been made for a memorial bench however there had also been mention of expanding this to install more benches across Brackla. Members agreed that the amount for the memorial bench may now be more as the quote was out of date.

Members requested clarification of the financial situation surrounding the Community Centre to which the RFO explained that based on last year's figures of expenditure the Centre costs are £21,000.00. Based on the predictions and the worst-case scenario which would be no income than what has been already received from the nursery there could be a maximum £20,000.00 shortfall. However, with the £16,000.00 underspend from events for the current year, along with the £6,000.00 income over expenditure that the Centre brought in last year,

this would cover the shortfall. He clarified that based on this, even if the Council did experience the worst-case scenario, there would still be at least a £25,000.00 Community Centre reserve budget at the end of the year.

Resolved:

The Committee recommend that £15,200.00 be reallocated to the earmarked reserves listed below:

Hanging Basket Brackets	£8,500.00
Signs	£5,000.00
Winter Bedding	£ 500.00
Car Park Street Lights	£1,200.00

Furthermore that a further £5,000.00 be reallocated and earmarked for bins across Brackla.

The Committee also recommend that the £6,000.00 income over expenditure from the Community Centre for 2019-20 be reallocated to the Centre Reserve budget.

It is also recommended that the budget for the memorial bench be increased to £1,000.00 and the subject of further benches in Brackla be an item to take forward under 2021-22 expenditure and therefore considered at a future Finance meeting when planning the precept for 2021-22. Early observations on this topic however highlighted the need to put new benches in new locations and not replace existing ones (unless obviously needed due to deterioration).

The Committee requested that clarification be sought from Officers in BCBC as to their understanding of which bins they are emptying and on what frequency in order to inform the needs for BCC's own contractor.

Based on the above being agreed this would leave a general reserve of £16,895.00 for 2020-21.

4. Brackla Christmas Lights

The Clerk presented the information which included a proposal for the current Christmas lights for 2020 which focused on the roundabouts and the main roads coming from them, as requested by Full Council at its meeting in December 2019 as the lights seemed to be too dispersed across the area.

Based on the Council's previous discussions there had also been the suggestion to purchase more lights to which the Clerk presented several options and costings for the Committee to consider.

Members discussed the fact that with the proposal to focus on roundabouts and main roads, based on the current number of lights, this would potentially remove them from Church Acre and Channel View. It was agreed that this was not favourable and that the Committee would rather maintain the lights in these areas and even expand on them if possible.

Likewise maintaining them on Coychurch Road was discussed and again, it was agreed that if possible, the lights should remain here also. The Chair highlighted that based on discussions over the previous item, the Council were in a good position financially so maybe now was a good time to look at expanding the collection of Christmas lights. The RFO confirmed that the current budget for Christmas lights this year was £12,230.00.

The proposal discussed was to add 16 new lights to the four roundabouts across Brackla which would then free up the existing 16 to be placed elsewhere. In addition to this the Members discussed the tree lights on the tree between the Two Brewers pub and the Community Centre and agreed that these needed new lights for this year. Members compared the costs for the sets of lights as well as the frequency and cost associated with dressing and undressing the tree that was required for the cheaper lights compared with those that were more expensive but permanent. Members agreed that the costs were somewhat comparable in the end but highlighted that the benefit of the more expensive ones were that they were meant to be permanent, therefore more resilient and also had a 5 year guarantee.

The Committee also briefly discussed the ribbon and cone trees however felt that at this time they were very big items to purchase financially and that there may not be suitable locations for them in Brackla. It was felt that there would be more achieved with expanding the column displays and introducing some colours into these.

Resolved:

Based on discussions, the Committee recommended the following in relation to Brackla Christmas lights:

1. That the plan as proposed in the diagram form the basis for the existing 52 Christmas lights;
2. That the Council purchase 16 of the Holly Column Displays for use on the four roundabouts across Brackla;
3. That the 16 existing lights be split between Church Acre and Channel View;

4. That the Council agree to purchase Option 2 IP68 (submersible to 1m) 24V (safe) Maxiled Small Globe (34mm – golf ball size) Festoon Lighting system to light the tree between the Two Brewers pub and the Community Centre which comes with a 5 year;
5. That future budget planning should include expanding the number of lights slightly each year in order to increase the number of lights through Church Acre and Channel View and also maybe then other areas across Brackla.
6. Based on the above, the Committee recommend adding £7,770.00 to the Christmas Lights budget from General Reserves for 2020-21 in order to take the budget to £20,000.00 and achieve a substantial investment in Brackla's Christmas Lights.

If agreed, along with the recommendations from Item 3, this would take the general reserve budget to £9,125.00.

Signed by the Chairperson 2020/21

Cllr Keith Hughes

Dated: