

BRACKLA COMMUNITY COUNCIL



FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING 19 November 2020 at 6.00 pm Committee Room, Brackla Community Centre

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

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

5 Apologies for Absence
None

6 Declarations of Interest
Cllr I Hibble declared a personal interest in that he is a Civil Servant working for Welsh Government.

7 Precept/Budget 2021-22

The Chair clarified that the purpose of the meeting was to hold early discussions on the Council's precept for 2021-22 and that there would be a further meeting held in December prior to the Full Council meeting where the Committee's recommendations could be presented.

The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) presented the report and the Committee went through each line raising any queries with the RFO.

Discussions were held regarding the staffing budget based on the likely implications from the end of the apprenticeship scheme and as well as further proposals relating to the Clerk and RFO roles and salaries.

Members discussed the budget line 4100 'Councillor expenses' and proposed that given the fact that more Members were now taking their allowances, the budget should be set to reflect this.

Members queried the Youth Reserve to which the RFO explained that this had been donated to a BCBC Youth Club that used to run in the community centre but when it disbanded it gave the funding to Brackla Community Council to go towards a future youth service or group.

Members discussed the likely costs arising from the repairs and maintenance of the Community Centre in the forthcoming year and that this could potentially reduce the Community Centre reserve budget, depending on how much funding could be provided through grants such as the Town and Community Council fund. It was agreed that this, as well as any other projects for 2021 had to be considered for the December meeting of Full Council.

The Committee considered the precept comparison which set out various options including a 0%, 0.64%, 1.5% and 2% changes to Council Tax. The RFO explained that as the base rate had reduced this year, this meant that for a 0% increase, the precept would be £168,580.00 and for the precept to remain the same as the previous year, (169,630.00) there would need to be an increase of 0.64%. The RFO recommended an increase of at least 0.9% to keep the budget in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Cllr J Spanswick commented that he had no issue with the precept remaining the same or being increased as there would be work in the future as part of the Council's Five Year Plan, which would require additional funding.

Cllr I Hibble proposed that the precept be increased by at least the minimum to cover CPI.

The Chair commented that maybe the Council could look in the future towards submitting applications and applying for additional funds from elsewhere.

Cllr D Aston proposed that the precept remain the same at a minimum with possibly a 1.5% increase as in order for the projects under the Five year Plan to be achieved, the Council need to have available funds.

Cllr T Walsh proposed that the Community Council look to alternative income streams and other avenues for funding. He put forward that whilst any change is

very small compared to Council tax widely, as this had been a tough year for everyone the Community Council should recognise this, live within its means and not increase the precept this year.

The Chair proposed that by keeping the precept the same and only increasing by 0.64% this would send out a good message at this time.

Cllr J Spanswick proposed a 0.9% increase to keep the budget in line with CPI.

Resolved:

1. The Committee requested that a Human Resources/Personnel Committee meeting be held to consider a staffing review of the office staff to help inform the precept budget planning including:
 - The request from the RFO for a reduction in hours;
 - A review of the Clerk salary and responsibilities;
 - The possible retention of an apprentice or Admin Assistant
2. It was proposed that the £1000.00 set against budget line 4297 'VE Day Celebration' be reallocated to budget line 4100 taking it up to £1200.00 given the fact that the VE Day event that was meant to take place in 2020 unfortunately didn't happen.
3. Members requested that the Clerk explore the possibility of whether the 'Youth' reserve could be used to partially fund the summer playscheme for 2021 as it had not been utilised in the last few years.
4. It was agreed that a final recommendation on the precept would be deferred until the next Finance Committee meeting in order to receive further information from the HR/Personnel Committee and any resulting from the Council's Full Council meeting.

Signed by the Chairperson 2020/21

Cllr Keith Hughes

Dated: