

Swanley Town Council

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POLICY AND FINANCE

MINUTES

Wednesday 22nd January 2020

Present: Chair Cllr M Horwood, Deputy Chair Cllr V Letchford, Cllr G Darrington, Cllr P Darrington, Cllr J Domigan, Cllr C Lee,

Also Present: Cllr L Ball, Cllr C Barnes, Cllr J Griffiths, Cllr T Searles

Officers: CEO - Steve Nash
RFO - Steve Innes
Assistant Town Clerk – Toni Roast
Democratic Services Officer - Barbara Playfoot

Public Participation

A resident from St Georges Road queried the proposed budget for 2020 – 2021 questioning why there had been no provision in the budget to hold a suggested sum of £300,000 in a reserve fund rather than purchasing further properties, he felt that this left the council vulnerable, having explained how he had looked at the figures over the last year, queried some of the spend and come to this conclusion. Cllr Horwood explained that this would be discussed at the point when the budget was on the agenda.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr J Barnes, Cllr J Tuckfield

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

10904 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

To approve as correct the Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 20th November 2019

APPROVED

10905 TO RECEIVE THE MONTHLY FINANCES

Briefly following up on some of the residents' points Cllr Horwood explained that the Civic expenditure was usually in deficit as it is used to fund free events, maintain the council buildings etc. It does not generate any notable income, it is the other venues profit pushed back into the Civic budget that allows free events, maintenance of council assets and investment along with the precept. The LINK comes under this budget and with the funding being removed in April 2020 the council will have to look at the costs going forward.

Cllr Searles noted that last year's budget we exceeded on income and cut down expenditure.

- Cllr C Barnes asked why the consultancy fees are over budget. The CEO explained that these were made up of Sewer survey, gas/electric inspections for the house purchases, Estate agents fees for the Sale of the Woodlands and the purchase of houses for rental. He has said that the legal fees could possibly be capitalised.
- Cllr C Barnes asked why the Oktoberfest had made a loss and other events also have not turned a profit. The CEO said that there are only so many events that you can stage free of charge. This year the council will be charging non-residents of Swanley a £1 per head for 1812 and the Fireworks to start off-setting the costs as year on year the costs are increasing as the popular events require more staffing and facilities therefore costs go up. The council is suffering from our own success.
- Cllr Horwood also commented on the Oktoberfest event saying from time to time it is good to try a new event however, the Oktoberfest did suffer a loss through a variety of reasons and Leadership feels that it would not be viable to replicate the event next year. The CEO commented that although it was a good event unless there is a sponsor, another event of that type will not be run.
Cllr Horwood also commented on the 1812 event by saying initially the 1812 did not bring in any income but now it does have income from stall holders and catering outlets and with the £1 non-resident charge and the parking charges from non-residents it will go some way to pay for some of the entertainment etc.
- Cllr G Darrington asked why there was no income showing for the Town Crier advertising and Swanley in Bloom. The CEO said that there are several advertisements in the latest version of the Town Crier so the income should start to show once the invoices are produced. Cllr G Darrington went on to say that further sponsorship should be sort to cover the costs of Swanley In Bloom. The CEO said that sponsorship had been set as a target for the council this year.
- Cllr Letchford questioned why the property expenses were so high last month. The RFO explained that sliding doors had been installed in the Alexandra Suite to create another meeting area and essential roof repairs were required due to the extraordinary rainfall. Cllr Horwood said that there had been no upkeep of the buildings so ongoing repairs are necessary.
- Cllr Letchford also asked why the training costs were up. The CEO explained that the new Park staff required Health and Safety training along with inspection of Play areas etc. This was vital as if there was an accident qualified staff are able to verify the condition of the areas for insurance purposes.
- Cllr Horwood commented that the Alexandra Suite's report was positive and commended the Manager and her staff on a great job. He also thought it was a positive move to install new sliding doors between the main room and the bar area to create another room that could be hired, the venue is in a good position.
- Cllr Horwood said that an expected that the Olympic will be at break-even at April this year which is a great improvement on previous years when the venue made losses.
- Cllr G Darrington asked why there were different amounts paid by 'We Buy any Car' for rent of an office. The RFO explained that they are billed per day so some weeks they would occupy the office 6 days and another week 5 days
- Cllr G Darrington also asked when will the flat rental be increased, the CEO replied that the rent will be increased from 1st April.

- Cllr Domigan asked if there was any plans to increase the catering revenue at the Olympic. The CEO said that the Olympic is now open every Friday evening and that bar snacks are available. He went on to say that he thought it would be a good place to have a Pizza restaurant and has approached a company with a view running the outlet.
- Cllr Horwood the Park made a good healthy profit over the summer but that will decrease over the next few months due to the season. Also this is against the backdrop of improvement and maintenance costs.
- Cllr G Darrington questioned as to why there has been no rent received from Swanley Railway. The RFO informed her that they do not get invoiced until February. Cllr G Darrington commented that the Dino Carts and the older activities are not being used. The CEO said that with D & G the fairground people on site over the summer offering rides it distracts from some of the rides the Park is offering. The plan is not to use D & G as much this coming year so visitors will hopefully use all the rides the park offers. Another attraction we are introducing is canoe training, a lot of schools go to other venues to learn canoeing. One of the Park managers is doing a Canoe Instructors course so that schools can come to the Park to be trained therefore bringing in more revenue.
- Cllr G Darrington asked is there any progress on the cesspit project. The CEO said that he and the Park Director met with a company to talk about Eco-toilets and use them as an option in a different location in the Park as a trial so, less demand on the cesspit.
- Cllr G Darrington asked when the rates will cease for the Woodlands. The CEO said that they ceased on the 16th December.

RESOLVED: To accept reports A/B/C/D/E/F/G

10906 BUDGET SETTING 2020 – 2021

To approve the 2020 – 2021 to Full Council on 5th February 2020

- a. Swanley Town Council Overall Budget
- b. Civic Budget
- c. Alexandra Suite Budget
- d. Olympic Budget
- e. Swanley Park Budget
- f. Housing Stock

The RFO asked that the increase of the precept by 3%, balance the budget and accept a 3% increase across the board be approved to Full Council on 4th February 2020. The budget has been broken down into individual budgets for ease.

Cllr Ball reflected on a point raised at a previous meeting regarding the payback of £530,000 to KCC for the charge they held over the Recreation ground. This in fact has had to be paid back so now the sum that might have been held in reserve is now not available. He went on to say that with the cost of the new Splash pool and the purchase of properties there will not be enough to fund a reserve. He went on to say that now was an ideal opportunity to put aside monies into a reserve and he suggested £300,000 and the council spend £1.7m rather than the agreed £2m.

Cllr Searles pointed out that properties although not liquid reserves they were capital reserves and would attract more return on investment as opposed to monies in a bank account. He went on to say that it was agreed that six properties would be purchased and these could be used as collateral if required.

The CEO does agree with Cllr Ball but said that the properties would attract in rent a total of £86,000 per year. The sink fund had already been set aside and he was very comfortable with the reserves being held in bricks and mortar. Cllr Ball insisted that the council have liquid reserves. There was support for both reserve proposals.

Cllr Horwood suggested that with the rent, the sink fund and the CIL payment would go some way to cover some of the reserves.

Cllr Searles added that there would be a CIL payment from the Town Centre development possibility within the next 2 years along with several other developments planned that could also be allocated to the reserves. Also that SDC offer a bond scheme which could be investigated.

Cllr Horwood suggested that the RFO provide details of Capital spend 2019 – 2020 for information.

RESOLVED – Budget Setting 2020 – 2021 approved to Full Council on 5th February 2020

REPORT ON SALE OF WOODLANDS

To note value of sale and disposals attached

Appendix 1 & Appendix 2

Due to time constraints this item will be moved to the next Policy & Finance agenda to be held on the 19th February 2020.

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

To note the Internal Audit Report

Due to time constraints this item will be moved to Full Council agenda to be held on the 5th February 2020.

Date of next meeting – 19th February 2020

MEETING CLOSED AT 22.00

If you would like further information on any of the agenda items, please contact Mr Steve Nash, on 01322 611663 or snash@swanleytowncouncil.gov.uk