



<i>Meeting (No)</i>	<b>Full Council Meeting (6)</b>
<i>Time &amp; Date</i>	<b>23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 at 6pm</b>
<i>Location</i>	<b>Neston Town Hall</b>

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Cllrs: Wastell (Mayor), Davies, Edwards, Griffiths, Jones, Kynaston, Marple and Warner.

In attendance: Z. Dean (Locum Chief Officer), T. Godfrey (Finance Manager/RFO).

Also in attendance: Cllr A. Langan (CW&C), Mr R. Ward.

**PART 1: Items considered in the presence of the press and public**

**66 Apologies for Absence**

**It was RESOLVED:** To accept the following apologies for absence:

- Cllr Braithwaite – Another engagement
- Cllr Hardcastle – Another engagement
- Cllr Hudspeth – Holiday
- Cllr Townsend – Unwell
- To note Cllr Doughty was absent.

**67 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received from members.

**68 Minutes**

**It was RESOLVED:** To accept and sign the minutes from the Full Council meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

**69 Questions and Comments from Residents**

Mr R. Ward addressed Council from the public gallery, representing the volunteers who have managed the community pages of the neston.org.uk website prior to the Council’s inception. Mr Ward expressed his admiration for the councillors and asked if all councillors could review the community site and feedback on any areas for improvement. Mr Ward was keen to recruit a Council volunteer who is interested in websites to support the process.

Cllr S. Jones volunteered.

**70 Presentation: Foster Care in Cheshire West & Chester**

CW&C Cllr Adam Langan presented on the ‘Crisis in Foster Care’ within the region. It was highlighted that Council members can use their voices in the community to raise awareness of this issue. A digital copy of the presentation would be forwarded to members for information.

**71 Committee Minutes**

- a) **It was RESOLVED:** To approve the minutes from the HR Committee held on 07/11/2023.
- b) **It was RESOLVED:** To approve the minutes from the Extraordinary Market & Town Hall Committee held on 15/11/23.
- c) **It was RESOLVED:** To approve the minutes from the Market & Town Hall Committee held on 21/11/23.

	<p>d) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To approve the minutes from the Rescheduled Community &amp; Environment Committee held on 05/12/2023.</p> <p>e) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To approve the minutes from the Finance &amp; Administration Committee held on 12/12/2023.</p>
<b>72</b>	<p><b>Funding of the General Reserves</b></p> <p>The Finance Manager gave a brief summary of the General Reserve position for Neston Town Council with expenditure over £200K; 3 months of net revenue expenditure must be kept as per the Joint Panel on Accounting Governance (JPAG – Practitioner’s Guide). Since the covid pandemic, income streams that are not precepted also need to be taken into consideration as these can disappear. Any shortfall between the General Reserve and the actual calculation must be considered. The calculation includes the current year’s unfunded pension strain cost, which came out of the General Reserve.</p> <p>The recommendation received from F&amp;A committee would demonstrate to the auditor that the Council has a plan to build up its reserves.</p> <p><b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To increase the General Reserve fund over the next 3 years by increasing the precept (£11,600 per year, £35,000 total).</p>
<b>73</b>	<p><b>2024/2025 Budget Setting</b></p> <p>a) Council noted that the CW&amp;C base rates for the precept have dropped which will affect the overall tax percentage amount. Within Neston, 75% of properties are Band D or under. At the proposed rate the increase would equate to £9.93 for the 2024/25 tax year, on a Band D property.</p> <p>Members debated the possibility of increasing the overall precept. Members noted that the percentage figure does not reflect the amount that would be payable.</p> <p><b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To receive the RFO reports; report and Band Rates.</p> <p>b) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To amend the original 2024/25 draft budget proposal, as recommended by the Finance &amp; Administration Committee and informed by Council committees.</p> <p>Following a proposal from Cllr Davies, seconded by Cllr Warner,</p> <p><b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To increase the precept tax request on a Band D property to 20% (£12.39 per annum). A named vote was requested.</p> <p>6 x For (Cllrs: Davies, Griffiths, Kynaston, Marple, Warner and Wastell)  1 x Against (Cllr Edwards)  1 x Abstention (Cllr Jones)</p>
<b>74</b>	<p><b>Precept 2024/2025</b></p> <p><b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To approve the amended precept figure of £439,228, requesting this sum from Cheshire West and Chester Council for the financial year 2024/25. A named vote was requested.</p> <p>7 x For (Cllrs: Davies, Griffiths, Jones, Kynaston, Marple, Warner and Wastell)  1 x Against (Cllr Edwards)</p>
<b>75</b>	<p><b>Insurance Provision</b></p> <p>The Locum Chief Officer summarised the Council’s insurance costs.</p> <p>Year 1: 2023/24 £1,457.84, Year 2: 2024/25 £1481.02 (an original increase of £23.18 included provision for additional staff). Market &amp; Town Hall Committee’s request for clarification on the Council taking back ownership of additional gazebos increased the total by £67.66.</p>

Mayor’s Initial & Date:

	<b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To pay the insurance premium of £1,548.68 for year two of a previously agreed three-year term.
<b>76</b>	<b>Lift Maintenance Update</b>
a)	The Locum Chief Officer provided an update with regards to the situation with the malfunctioning rear Town Hall lift. The rear lift does not have a call-out function in the case of an emergency.
b)	Following feedback from CW&C, Council noted that the addition of a call-out device would fall within the Town Council's maintenance amount. <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To approve the addition of a call-out device on the grounds of Health & Safety and delegate to Market & Town Hall committee once additional quotations have been received for this work.
<b>77</b>	<b>Asset Management of Neston Town Council</b>
a)	The Locum Chief Officer summarised the previously circulated report (FA-30) which Council noted for background information.
b)	<b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To delegate the asset management agreement and remuneration cost negotiations with CW&C to the Chief Officer.
<b>78</b>	<b>Locum Chief Officer's Report</b> Members complimented the staff team on the Christmas window displays at the front and rear of the Town Hall. Neston Town Council thanked the staff for their continued hard work, collective cheerful manner and willingness; noting that it was much appreciated. <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To receive the Locum Chief Officer's Report.
<b>79</b>	<b>Date of the Next Meeting</b> The next Full Council meeting is scheduled for 19 <sup>th</sup> March 2024.
<b>PART 2: Items considered in the absence of the Press and Public</b>	
<b>81</b>	There were no confidential items to consider.

**Meeting closed at 19:15.**

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_ **Dated** \_\_\_\_\_