



Meeting (No) **Finance & Administration Committee (4)**
Time & Date **6pm Tuesday 10th December 2024**
Place **Neston Town Hall**
Document **Minutes**

Present: Cllrs C. Braithwaite (Chair), S. Adderley, S. Hudspeth, S. Jones, P. Kynaston, D. Ruscoe and S. Wastell.

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

PART 1: Items considered in the presence of the press and public	
30	Apologies for Absence
	No apologies received; all members were present.
31	Public Participation
	No members of the public were present.
32	Declarations of Interest
	None received.
33	Minutes of the Last Meeting
	RESOLVED: to accept the minutes from the meeting held on 12/11/24 as an accurate record of that meeting. The Chair duly signed the minutes.
34	Committee Accounts Month 7
	RESOLVED: To approve the budget and EMRs, as presented.
35	Council Photocopier Contract
a	The Chair thanked officers for the extensive report. The Chief Officer walked the committee through the contents of the report, plans for the upgraded equipment, and the cost savings of up to £300 per year, dependent upon which company was selected. RESOLVED: To receive the report.
b	RESOLVED: To appoint Company 1 for the following equipment as detailed in the report: a new A3 Ricoh IMC 3010 at the cost of £83.65 per quarter + finisher @ £23.85 per quarter. Three new A4 Ricoh M320FB B&W new at a cost of £14.00 per quarter per unit.
36	General Reserves Policy
a	The RFO clarified that the JPAG rules state that Councils should hold 3 months minimum expenditure in General Reserves, plus income streams, since covid. The Council's General Reserves were reduced following the pension strain cost liability, of which there is was a £23,500 shortfall. Following a question, the RFO confirmed that 3 months' worth of General Reserves was sufficient for a Council the size of Neston, but that does not mean that this could not change in the future. RESOLVED: To accept the General Reserves Policy.

Initial:
Date:

b	<p>The RFO explained that in 2023/24 the reserves had dropped down. Committee noted that due to the current year's underspend, and partial reduction of NI costs under the previous government, the Council had the funds available to pay the previously committed amount in full in 2025/26. This would reduce the liability for 2026/27, without raising the precept in the future to do so. The advantage of paying the amount now would mean that the General Reserve would reach the required amount sooner.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To increase the General Reserves by £23,100 for 2025/26, removing the burden of the previously agreed £11,600 for 2026/27.</p>
37	Motion from Cllr Braithwaite
	<p>Committee noted that principle authorities can get direct funding from government, whereas Town & Parish Councils cannot, details of which had been clarified by the Chief Officer through ChALC. Cllr Braithwaite explained that Faversham Council had already passed this motion.</p> <p>RESOLVED: to write to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government to demand that the compensation formula is changed so that Town and Parish Councils receive the same compensation as Principal Councils for financial losses due to the forthcoming National Insurance changes.</p> <p>It was NOTED: to contact ChALC regarding a national response from NALC.</p>
38	Budget Setting 2025/26
a	<p>Committee debated the precept report, and the positives and negatives of not raising the precept to what could be deemed an acceptable amount. It was noted that the cap on the unitary authority's 5% would be lifted for the 2025/26 budget, which could see local rates soar. The RFO trialled a number of options and scenarios for an average Band D property, as per the committee's request.</p>
b	<p>The RFO clarified that annual inflation had been built into the relevant budget lines. Committee noted that the tax base figures had not yet been received.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: To Full Council a precept increase of 3.8% [£456,382].</p>
29	Date of Next Meeting
	<p>It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of the F&A Committee is 18/02/25 at 6pm.</p>

The meeting closed at 6.52pm.

Signed _____ Date _____