

**TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

**FINANCE & POLICY COMMITTEE – MONDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2019**

<b>Summary</b>	
<p>This is a report of follow-up to resolutions made at the Finance &amp; Policy Committee. This is a Standing Item on agendas to update Members. Once follow-up is completed, items will be marked as closed. Ongoing items will be brought back to Committee when a new decision is required or when a fuller update is needed.</p>	
<b>Min. 262/16</b>	<b>Trusts and Charities</b> – These have remained dormant for more than 15 years and do not form part of the Council's accounting system and are in a standalone bank account. The Town Clerk is meeting with a solicitor specialising in this area of work in December. <b>Ongoing</b>
<b>Min.86/19</b>	<b>Online Banking</b> – As recommended by F&P, it was resolved by FTC on 24 June that the Town Council moves to online banking. The Office Manager is currently discussing this with Barclays Bank. <b>Ongoing</b>
<b>Min. 267/19</b>	<b>Review of Financial Regulations</b> – At the last meeting, it was resolved that Cllrs Ross, Loosmore and the Town Clerk meet to review the Financial Regs. <b>Ongoing</b>

**Town Clerk**

**28 November 2019**

## Devolution of Services

**Summary** – This report asks Members to note an update and consider how the process and progress towards devolution of services and asset transfers can be best communicated to local communities

### 1. Background

As Members are aware, Marlborough (along with Malmesbury, Trowbridge and Tidworth) are in Tranche 4 of the programme for service devolution. Negotiations will start in May 2020. (The full programme list is at **Appendix 3**). A request to WC to start working on this earlier with us and to have lists of WC assets, Id Verde contract details, etc. in the hope of making it easier to estimate budgets for 2020/21, was not successful. This is largely down to officer resource:

*Thank you for your email. Since we met some time ago further developments have been taken forward with the programme, our Assets Team undertaking a thorough audit of what assets we own in each town, so the list we provided you would be out of date. This work is continuing and the team are working through the Towns tranche by tranche, so we are currently unable to provide you with this information, this has to be said for all the information we would provide you prior to our initial meeting as we have to prioritise the towns we are currently and imminently working with. So, unfortunately, we will not be able to share any information with you until next year. Our hands are tied in regard to this as I'm sure you will appreciate will only have limited resource dedicated to the programme.*

*In regard, to the Confidentiality Agreement the team are in the process of sending out the Tranche 3 towns so once that has been completed, we will look to send onto you the end of this year/beginning of next.*

### 2. Chippenham Town Council

Salisbury City Council, Devizes Town Council and Chippenham Town Council have all gone through the process. As part of the preparation of taking devolution forward for Marlborough, the Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Town Clerk met with the Mayor of Chippenham, Leader of the Council, the Town Clerk and other senior members of staff at Chippenham Town Council. This was a useful meeting – a chance to discuss process with a council which had recently taken on services and land from WC. A background note is at **Appendix 1**. (It is worth remembering that Chippenham Town Council has a staff of more than 70 serving a population of 40,000, but this steer was, nonetheless, hugely helpful).

### 3. Communication

It is clear that an important element is how the process is communicated to local communities – letting local people know that the services and assets taken on will be run well and offer value for money. It's about raising the Town Council's profile and involving residents in the process. Chippenham Town Council took the decision, early on, to keep its residents informed by producing a leaflet on devolution. This is at **Appendix 2**. This is something that Members may like to consider for Marlborough.

### 4. What now?

Marlborough Town Council is not entirely new to this – it has already taken on Coopers Meadow and public toilets from WC. It is already preparing for increased service demand through proposals for a new workshop now that the current one is no longer fit for purpose. Thought now should be given to the services and assets the Town Council wishes to take on and, as importantly, those it does not want to have. Thought will need to be given to WC's

current contract with Id Verde and whether to use any topping up through this company's services until their contract finishes.

### **5. Financial Implications**

Councillors have tried to look at how all of this will affect budgets for 2020/21 and have made adjustments where they have been able to. However, Members may feel it is prudent to wait until more information is available – one larger precept hit rather than 2 slightly lower ones. The months in the lead up to completion of devolution (December 2020) could be used to communicate how we would provide services for Marlborough – doing it well, even better than what the service provision is now. As Members are aware, there is already some contingency with an ear marked reserve set aside for this of £46,000.

### **6. Point to Note**

- A set of FAQs has been issued in the last week
- Members may like to consider contacting other comparable councils for further information sharing

### **Town Clerk's Recommendation**

The Town Clerk recommends that Members note this update report and consider how to take service devolution forward with regards to:

- i) Whether to make budget allocations for this in 2020/21 or 2021/22 (or both)
- ii) Promotion and communication of the devolution journey
- iii) How to best work with Wiltshire Council towards devolution

**Town Clerk**

**28 November 2019**

## Retention Policy

**Summary** – A Retention Policy was adopted by Marlborough Town Council in March 2019. Following training around GDPR, it has been advised that it is amended to include advice about the handling and retention of emails. Members are asked to consider how this should be incorporated into the existing policy.

### 1. Background

A Retention Policy aims to provide a consistent approach to the way the Council handles its records and provide a clear set of guidelines and identifies records that may be worth preserving permanently as a part of a local authority archive as well as preventing the premature destruction of records that need to be retained for a specific legal, financial or statutory period.

Good Records Management is not difficult; simply put, the Council needs to keep accurate and timely records for the appropriate period of time, making sure that obsolete records are securely and appropriately disposed of.

The Town Clerk is discussing the retention of emails with the Town Council's Data Protection Officer (DPO) – a service outsourced to 1-West (which sits within BANES) and will give a verbal update at the meeting.

The current Retention Policy is at **Appendix 1**.

### 2. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this policy.

### Recommendation

That Members consider an amendment to the current policy to incorporate guidance on the retention of emails.

**Town Clerk**

**November 2019**

## Budgets/Precept 2020/21

**Summary** - In accordance with para. 3 of the Council's Financial Regulations, the Property, Planning and A&OS Committees have agreed draft expenditure budgets for 2020/21. Members of the F&P Committee are now asked to:

- i) Consider the draft budget for the Finance & Policy Committee
- ii) Review recommendations and draft budgets for the Property, A&OS, Planning Committees and Staffing Sub-Committee
- iii) Consider whether an additional meeting of the Finance & Policy Committee should be held in order to finalise recommendations on committee budgets and a precept figure to Full Town Council at its meeting on 20 January 2020

**Members are reminded that these budgets are in draft format and are to be amended**

### 1. Background

The A&OS, Property and Planning Committees have all agreed budgets for 2020/21 for submission to the Finance & Policy Committee for review. The Staffing Sub-Committee has also made a recommendation to this committee. These and the proposed budget for the F&P Committee are set out in this report. An agreed budget and precept figure should be submitted by F&P to FTC for final review and decision on 20 January 2020. The precept requirement for 2020/21 must be returned to Wiltshire Council before 24 January 2019.

### 2. Capping of Town and Parish Councils

Councillors will be aware that over the last 2-3 years there has been a possibility that the government would cap town and parish councils and extend referendum principles to them. (This means that there has to be a referendum if the precept rise is in excess of 2%). In 2018, central government confirmed that it would defer extending referendum principles in this sector for three years.

### 3. Community Asset Transfers and Devolution of Services

All budgets will be affected by devolution of services and asset transfers from Wiltshire Council (see also agenda item 8). Negotiations will begin in May 2020 with completion in December 2020. However, there is nothing to stop the Town Council topping up any services (i.e. more street litter picking in Marlborough) at any point which is already done by some other towns in the county. Without firm details of what assets and services will be taken on Members may like to consider allocating a contingency budget line for this. There is already an Ear Marked Reserve of £46,000 set aside for this.

### 4. Finance and Policy Committee Proposed Expenditure - 2019/20

The draft expenditure budget for the Finance and Policy Committee is attached at **Appendix 1**. As with other committee budget lines, these have been colour coded to help identify where there is an increase, decrease or an additional budget line.

### 5. Staffing Sub-Committee

The Staffing Sub-Committee met on 12 November. It is not a budget holding committee but, under the Scheme of Delegation, can make recommendations to the F&P Committee. It made the following recommendation:

**The Staffing Sub-Committee recommends salary figures to the F&P committee for the Administrative Staff (F&P), Grounds Team (A&OS) and Caretakers (Property Committee).**

These figures are set out in the table at **Appendix 2**. *All Committee budgets have been amended to include the salary budgets.* Members will want to be aware that the Sub-Committee is also

looking at the possibility of additional office-based staff and a consultation is being held with staff members on 13 December 2019.

#### 6. Review of Property, A&OS and Planning Committees Draft Budgets

The recommended Property, A&OS and Planning Committee expenditure budgets for 2020/21 are at **Appendix 3**. These have been cleared by each committee and salary budget lines amended in line with the Staffing Sub Committee's recommendation at para. 5 above.

7. **Overall Predicted Committee Expenditure 2020/21** - If the F&P Committee agrees its own budget and those of all other Standing Committees, then the budget expenditure requirement will be as follows:

Committee	Predicted Expenditure 2019/20	Predicted Expenditure 2020/21	Increase or Decrease	Percentage Increase/Decrease in Budget
F&P	347,334	412,647	+£65,313	+18.8%
A&OS	267,083	303,048	+£35,965	+13.5%
Property	222,648	301,089	+£78,441	+35.2%
Planning	11,500	11,500	-	-
<b>Total predicted expenditure</b>	<b><u>£848,565</u></b>	<b><u>£1,028,284</u></b>	<b><u>+£179,719</u></b>	<b><u>+21.2%</u></b>

8. **Overall Predicted Committee Income 2019/2020** - If the F&P Committee agrees its own budget and those of all other Standing Committees, then committee incomes will be as follows:

Committee	Predicted Income 2019/20	Predicted Income 2020/21	Increase Or Decrease	Percentage Increase/Decrease in Budget
F&P	1,400	2,900	+£1,500	+101.1%
A&OS	42,000	41,750	- £ 250	- 0.6%
Property	135,290	139,640	+£4,350	+ 3.2%
Planning	-			
<b>Total predicted income</b>	<b><u>£178,690</u></b>	<b><u>184,290</u></b>	<b><u>+£5,600</u></b>	<b><u>+ 3.1%</u></b>

#### 9. Precept calculation based on Committee Recommendations

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total Planned Expenditure	809,831	848,565	1,028,284
Less Planned Income	183,500	178,690	184,290
<b>Net Expenditure to be funded</b>	<b>626,331</b>	<b>669,875</b>	<b>843,994</b>
Precept	626,331	669,875	843,994
Tax Base *	3332.16	3432.93	3504.70
Tax per Band D Property	<b>£187.96</b>	<b>£195.13</b>	<b>£240.81</b>

\*The Tax Base is the average number of Band D properties within a town/parish. It is used to calculate the Band D charge for each town/parish. This is done by dividing the total precept requirement by the tax base.

At this preliminary stage, committee recommendations to meet a budget requirement of **£843,994** would equate to a precept rise of **23.42%** and a Band D figure of **£240.82pa** which equates to a rise over 2019/20 of **£45.68p** a year or **£3.81p** a month. (Different property bands will have different figures)

## 10. Possible Savings

No suggested savings have been made at this stage. Committees have tried to estimate the impact of the coming devolution of services and asset transfers – no easy task without fuller details from WC. Larger increases which sit alongside devolution include £20,000 (a dedicated devolution contingency) (F&P), an increase of £13,000 in the budget for the new workshop (Property) as well as significant increases due to required external works to the Town Hall and High Street/Kingsbury Street properties (£15,000) (Property). With the Town Council running more events, additional funds of £15,000 have been included (Lights Switch-on, Puppet Festival and Dark Skies). The salary budgets also include an uplift of 3% due to the likely national salary increase.

## 11. Points to Note

- No budget has yet been included for a road sweeper or equipment for the new workshop
- No budget has yet been included for any additional staff for increased services
- No budget has been included for the new informal car park at The Common as identified in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan (though is set aside as an ear marked reserve). This is also listed in the Council's Action Plan under AS7
- Other projects listed in the Council's Project Plan have been taken into account where projects are ranked high or medium

## 12. Percentage Rises

Other examples of potential increases over the precept for 2019/20 are:

1%	- £690,706	– This represents a Band D figure of £197.08
2%	- £697,540	– This represents a Band D figure of £199.03
3%	- £704,374	– This represents a Band D figure of £200.98
4%	- £711,243	– This represents a Band D figure of £202.94
5%	- £718,077	– This represents a Band D figure of £204.89
6%	- £724,912	– This represents a Band D figure of £206.84
7%	- £731,746	– This represents a Band D figure of £208.79
8%	- £738,580	– This represents a Band D figure of £210.74
9%	- £745,414	– This represents a Band D figure of £212.69
10%	£752,248	– This represents a Band D figure of £214.64
15%	£786,454	– This represents a Band D figure of £224.40
20%	£820,660	– This represents a Band D figure of £234.16
25%	£854,831	– This represents a Band D figure of £243.91

## 13. Other Wiltshire Town Council Precepts for 2019/20 (current FY)

These include:

Chippenham	£239.61
Calne	£210.31
Salisbury	£208.00
Malmesbury	£205.49
Royal Wootton Bassett	£204.81
Cricklade	£196.72
Marlborough	£195.13
Corsham	£168.74
Devizes	£157.92
Trowbridge	£153.98

Details of all of Wiltshire's town and parish precepts can be found at:  
<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/benefits-council-tax-parish-precepts>

**14. Parish Precept setting in England**

Members may find the information interesting at **Appendix 4** which lists the highest council tax Band Ds in the country. Many of those with the highest precepts are in unitary authority areas where land and assets have been transferred to towns and parishes. It's also worth noting that Marlborough and other towns in the north of Wiltshire have higher precepts because they have historically been responsible for cemeteries, parks and play areas whilst those in southern Wiltshire did not share the same responsibilities. (Marlborough's overall precept requirement for 2019/20 was 669,875.00 and the Band D annual precept charge was £195.15.)

**Town Clerk's Recommendation**

The Town Clerk recommends that Members:

- i) Consider the draft budget for 2020/21 for the Finance and Policy Committee including the recommendation from the Staffing Sub-Committee
- ii) Review recommendations and consider draft budgets for 2020/21 submitted for the A&OS, Property and Planning Committees
- iii) Consider whether an additional meeting of the Finance & Policy Committee should be held in order to finalise recommendations on committee budgets and a precept figure to Full Town Council at its meeting on 20 January 2020

**Author – Town Clerk  
27 November 2019**