

PF/57 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION (15 minutes)

There were no members of the public or press present.

PF/58 UNITARY COUNCILLORS SESSION

Unitary Councillor Parry, Ludlow South, informed the Committee that there was currently a planning application in process for energy reservoirs in Ludford Parish which would cover roughly half an acre and generate Section 106 monies. Councillor Ginger asked that the details of the application be ascertained by the Town Clerk and Ludford Parish Council be informed that Ludlow Town Council may wish to comment.

PF/59 MINUTES

RESOLVED (Unanimous) AC/VP

That the open and closed session minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 12th September 2016, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PF/60 ITEMS TO ACTION

RESOLVED (Unanimous) AC/JS

That the Items to Action be noted.

PF/61 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

RESOLVED (Unanimous) AC/JS

That the Payments and Income Report, Bank Reconciliation, Barclaycard Statements and Paypal Report for August and September 2016, be received.

PF/62 2nd QUARTER INCOME & EXPENDITURE

RESOLVED (Unanimous) AC/JS

That the 2nd Quarter Income and Expenditure report be received.

PF/63 RESOLVED (Unanimous) AC/JS

That the 2nd Quarter Exceptions report be received.

PF/64 COUNCIL TAX REFERENDUM PRINCIPLES

The Town Clerk explained that the draft letter was based on a standard letter issued by the National Association of Local Councils. She drew Members attention to the questions contained within the 2017/18 Local Government Finance Settlement Technical Consultation Paper and suggested that as a Town Council Members only needed to answer question four to seven. She proposed the following answers:-

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| Question 4 | No |
| Question 5 | Yes |
| Question 6 | No |
| Question 7 | Extension of the referendum principles would discourage first tier council from investing in their local community which is their main purpose. |

The Town Clerk added that the paper seemed to use the average increase of 6.1% last year as justification for the referendum principle but that it needed to be made clear that this increase could be explained by the loss of Council Tax Support grants or forward planning in expectation of the loss of funding incurred by many town and parish councils.

Councillor Ginger reported that larger local businesses had recently been informed of significant increases in their business rates valuation, but at present they do not have to pay in full, because they are granted transitional relief. However, if and when transitional relief ends, they will be liable for the full amount.

He stated that currently properties/businesses with a rateable value of less than £12,000 per annum are not required to pay. There is a sliding scale of payment for rateable values between £12,000.00 and £15,000.00. He gave examples of two local independent retail shops that without the transitional relief, are liable for business rates of £72,000.00 and £32,000.00 respectively. When transitional relief ends, it would seem that the businesses of Ludlow could also come to an end. The financial burden will be impossibly onerous.

Councillor Ginger also reported that supermarkets in Ludlow are liable for business rates of £301,000.00 and £138,000.00 respectively. There seems to be little discernable reasoning behind the difference in rateable value between properties.

Councillors Gill and Ginger left the meeting at 7.43pm

Councillor Lyle stated that the issue of Business Rates and the Council Tax referendum needed to be treated as two separate issues and addressed to the MP in two separate letters. The Town Clerk reminded Members that tonight's agenda item was to discuss the Council Tax referendum and that the issue of Business Rates would be coming to the next full Council meeting.

Councillor Smithers asked if Chamber of Commerce could be asked for their input on the matter of Business Rates prior to the Council meeting.

The Town Clerk explained that the proposal to introduce a cap on parish council precept increases would be triggered once a Council met two criteria. Ludlow Town Council already met one and following finalisation of current discussions with Shropshire Council relating to the transfer of functions the Town Council would likely meet the second criteria within the next couple of years.

RESOLVED (Unanimous) JS/AC

That:-

- i) the Town Clerk edit the draft letter to ensure that it is direct and emphasises the issues in Ludlow.
- ii) the letter be sent on behalf of the Town Council from the Town Clerk.

Councillor Gill and Ginger rejoined the meeting at 7.52pm

PF/65 THE PUBLIC SECTOR DEPOSIT FUND

RESOLVED (Unanimous) JS/AC

That:-

- i) the outline information regarding the Public Sector Deposit Fund be noted.
- ii) an advisor from CCLA be invited to attend the next meeting of Policy and Finance Committee to make a presentation on the details of the fund and answer questions
- iii) where possible Councillors submit any questions they may have in advance of the meeting for submission to CCLA

PF/65 POLICIES

Member Co-Option Policy

RECOMMENDED (Unanimous) AC/JS

That, subject to insertion of the word "Council" to read "next full Council meeting" at paragraph 1.5 and the replacement of the word "applications" with "applicants" at paragraph 1.7, the Member Co-Option Policy be readopted.

PF/66 REGISTRAR SERVICE

RESOLVED (Unanimous) AC/JS

That the following comments be fed back to the Registrars Service:-

- i) Opening hours outside of work hours (9am-5pm) are needed to make the service more available to people who work full time.
- ii) The marriage space is perfunctory, and has no waiting area for guests.
- iii) There is no separate waiting area for people waiting to register a death and it can be distressing for bereaved relatives to sit amongst the general public.

- iv) In general the ground floor is very busy with incongruous activities taking place simultaneously without adequate separation.
- v) Only the ground floor of the building is used regularly, however the whole building is DDA compliant so rooms on the upper floors could be better utilised for Registrar functions.

PF/67 VOLUNTARY GROUPS SURVEY

RESOLVED (Unanimous) TG/AC

That the Town Clerk write a letter to Philip Dunne MP thanking him for his suggestion and explaining that the Town Council is already in contact with local voluntary groups through the process of putting together the new Town Plan and will continue to consult with them.

PF/68 INTEREST RATES

RESOLVED (Unanimous) AC/JS

That the change to interest rates be noted.

PF/69 BUDGET SETTING PROCESS

RESOLVED (Unanimous) AC/GG

That the budget setting process for 2017/18 be adopted.

The meeting closed at 8.18pm

Chairman

Date

N.B. No Closed Session Minutes will be issued.