

MINUTES of a meeting of the COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES WORKING PARTY held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on TUESDAY, 3 JANUARY 2023

Present: Councillor D Everitt (Chairman)

Councillors M B Wyatt, A S Black, J Geary, J Legrys and J Windram

Officers: Mrs A Crouch, Mrs C Hammond, Mr P Wheatley, Mr G Hammons, Ms R Haynes, Mr R Kyei and Ms S Thirkettle

## **20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor E Allman.

The Chairman advised that Councillor M French had been held up and would try to join the meeting remotely if she was able to do so.

## **21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor M Wyatt declared a registerable interest in all items as the owner of two businesses in Coalville.

Councillor J Legrys declared a registerable interest in all items as a volunteer at and Director of the Hermitage FM project.

## **22. 2022/23 QTR 2 FINANCE UPDATE REPORT**

The Finance Team Manager presented the report, outlining the expected deficit balances as at 31 March 2023 and highlighting the need to take action in order to ensure savings are made in 2022/23 of at least £17,000 in order that the Coalville Special Expenses budget and reserves would not be exceeded.

A member asked for clarification as to why there would be such a large budget deficit and officers responded that this had been raised in previous years and that the deficit position had been identified. However, it was noted that a savings plan had not been formulated when the budget was originally set and in order to maintain a balanced budget, the plan was for it to be addressed during this financial year. It was observed that annual expenditure had risen year on year but that income hadn't, additionally the district council grant had also decreased, therefore it had been a combination of factors which had led to the deficit position. It was highlighted that some of the need to make spending reductions would be on planned preventative maintenance. A member requested a more detailed breakdown of finances and officers agreed to provide this.

Members expressed a wish to see events broken down into more detail, for example instead of including Picnic in the Park under the umbrella of "Coalville Events" it was felt that it would be beneficial for members comprehension to see that this would still be a planned event under its own right.

A member thanked officers for the report and for the explanation around it but suggested that members could have received more notice of spiralling costs. Officers responded that ultimately the authority has a set amount of money which expenditure must be kept within and suggested that the current spending would send the budget into deficit, highlighting the need to attain a more balanced financial position.

Officers emphasised the importance of looking at ways to make savings in the present, as by acting later on a potential saving, this could run the risk of this saving not being

Chairman's initials

optimised, for example costs may have already been incurred which it would not be possible to claw back.

A member asserted that the working party did not have the responsibility of controlling the budget, however officers drew attention to the terms of reference in which it is stated that it is within the remit of the working party “to consider budget”.

A member suggested that there had been land within the special expenses area boundaries which had been rented out for less than the ‘going rate’, and suggested that by increasing rent, this would be a way to recoup some of the budget. Officers requested that the member provide specific details of the land in question so this could be investigated and followed up on.

Members asserted that they had not been provided with sufficient facts to come to a recommendation at this particular meeting and expressed reticence toward making decisions without being fully aware of the consequences of these decisions.

A member pointed out that there had been some positives, for example a £5,000 donation had been made to Coalville in Bloom and also money had been obtained in the form of grants from private companies.

The working group confirmed that whilst they would be satisfied to move and second the first recommendation, they wished to defer the decision on the second recommendation until further information had been provided.

It was moved by Councillor J Legrys, seconded by Councillor M Wyatt and

RESOLVED THAT

1. The 2022/23 Quarter 2 budget monitoring figures and forecasted outturn for 2022/23 be noted.
2. The decision to identify at least £17,000 of savings or deferral of planned maintenance to future financial years be deferred until the February meeting to allow officers time to provide the working party with a more detailed breakdown of the finances of the special expenses.

### **23. 2023/24 DRAFT BUDGET**

The Finance Team Manager presented the report and provided the options available in order to produce a balanced budget, highlighting the need for members to choose the appropriate balance between increasing council tax, reducing costs and rephasing asset preventative maintenance.

A member suggested that the Council approach private companies in order to sell advertising space around the town, which could be a viable route to increase income.

A debate was had around the potential to increase council tax, however it was highlighted by officers that this did depend on what other special expense areas charged due to the statutory limits of the council tax referendum principles.

It was suggested that the finance sub group should meet and include all members in order to share the detailed breakdown information which officers had been asked to provide. It was felt that this would allow more potential and time to look at finance in much finer detail. It was proposed that this could take the form of a briefing over Teams, proceeded by a formal meeting.

Members proposed to defer making a recommendation, however it was highlighted that this would leave insufficient time to bring those recommendations to Cabinet. Officers suggested that a further, formal meeting would be required in order to agree upon recommendations before these would be presented to Cabinet on 31 January. It was suggested that the working party form part of the consultation process, which would allow the finance team time to circulate the extra information which the working party had requested, and still allow time to hold another formal meeting prior to 31 January Cabinet, before the working party recommend the budget to Council in February.

It was agreed that the finance team would hold a briefing for members in which they would be able to ask questions, followed by a formal meeting to discuss the report again. Officers agreed to collaborate in order to arrange a date for the additional meeting following the briefing.

It was moved by Councillor J Legrys, seconded by Councillor A Black and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. Any comments and feedback in the recommended level of council tax increase/savings to be achieved be deferred to allow officers time to provide the working party with a more detailed breakdown of the finances of the special expenses
2. Once members have received and been briefed on the more detailed breakdown, a further meeting of the working party be held to provide any comments and feedback to Cabinet at its meeting on 31 January 2023 as part of the budget consultation process.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.40 pm

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