

**Minutes of the meeting of the FORWARD PLANNING COMMITTEE held in Rickards Hall at 8.15pm on Monday 29 October 2018**

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Present: Cllrs J Barnett, T Bryant, Mrs J Davison, G Middleton, A Layland, C Pearman, and S McGregor

In attendance: Christine Lane (Town Clerk), one member of the public and no press

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received, noted and accepted from Cllrs R Bell (unwell), V Maynard (unwell) M McArthur (work commitment), B Orridge (unwell), Z Roberts Smith (work commitment), M Robson (unwell), J Scholey (holiday), and B Todd (prior arrangement).

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS OR PREDETERMINATION** including any not already registered - none

**3. TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE FORWARD PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 JUNE 2018**

Agreed: that the minutes of the Forward Planning Committee meeting held on 26 June 2018 be duly signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

**4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE**, none

**5. TO CONSIDER THE LONG TERM FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN, IN LINE WITH THE COUNCIL'S AGREED VISION AND FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES TO ENSURE A COHERENT PLAN TO RESPOND TO THE EVOLVING SITUATIONS.**

No changes were proposed at this meeting.

**6. CONSIDER THE POTENTIAL DEVOLUTION OF SERVICES**

Members had been concerned previously that the number of reduced grass cuts by Kent Highways would be detrimental. However the hot dry summer had resulted in very little grass growing this year but it may need monitoring next.

**7. TO MONITOR, UPDATE AND MAINTAIN THE COUNCIL'S LONG, MEDIUM AND SHORT TERM PLAN – Including Residents' Proposals**

Members considered the existing plans and the list of good ideas from residents and

Agreed: in light of the proposed budget deficit, time should be taken to review the current plan and the additional proposals put forward by the residents. The review to look at possible external funding streams and the use of CIL, and to prioritise which projects can be afforded and give the best return to the town.

**8. TO REVIEW THE COUNCIL'S FIVE YEAR FORECAST OF REVENUE, CAPITAL AND EARMARKED RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS, AND MAKE ANY PROPOSALS FOR REVISING THE FORECAST**

Members first considered the full review of the 10 and 30 year building and open spaces maintenance plans. These are in place to ensure the good governance of the assets held, and adopted a standard structure intended to prevent large fluctuations to the Council Tax and to guide the budget setting process.

The plans are averaged out over the term period, and are collected as part of the Precept. Balancing adjustments are made, transferring funds in and out of the Earmarked Reserve Funds, dependent on whether expenditure in each particular year is light or heavy. Forward Planning undertook to review

the average amount required every third year of the Council's four year cycle. Last year staff time only allowed for some minor changes, so the delayed full review was considered.

The staff met with Cllr J Scholey and Cllr B Todd on 21 August to set the criteria for the Triennial Review. The Finance Officer advised that an increase of 8% should be added to the 2015 figures to reflect the increase in CPI over the three year period. Some changes have been included to take into account more frequent redecoration for Rickards Hall and Doggetts Barn and the removal of any work related to the toilets at Blossoms Park, which are currently being demolished. The open spaces plan required additional funding for interim tree works, additional surfacing work for the path around the Sports Pavilion, more regular pitch-spraying and decompaction at intervals. Resurfacing of car parks is all now included in the 10 year plan, in line with advice on surface durability. The 30 year plan includes the new perimeter bollards at Marsh Green installed this year and the replacement of Spitals Cross playground. An allocation for the west church yard wall has been included as this was missed from the original schedule..

The results of the review has resulted in the annual averaged expenditure below, with a peak in 2025/2026 requiring an input of £70K which can be withdrawn from 2029.

	2018/19	2019/20
<b>10 year Building Maintenance Plan</b>	£12,600 + 2%	£11,884
<b>Building Maintenance (30 year Plan)</b>	£19,825 + 2%	£15,433
<b>10 year Open Spaces Maintenance Plan</b>	£40,425+2%	£53,205
<b>Open Spaces Maintenance (30 year Plan)</b>	£49,550 +2%	£51,130

Agreed: to accept the revised Building and Open Spaces Maintenance plans as proposed.

### **Five Year Budget Projection**

Cllr Scholey was thanked for his hard work in putting forward the proposals. The basis of the forecast is outlined below:

Building is now well underway for the new Bellway housing development behind St Johns Way. It is estimated that it and other smaller developments will generate 90 extra Council Tax payers per annum from 2019/20 until 2023/2024. Generally the income has been increased by 2-3%, with the proposal for hall hires being 3%. On the expenditure side, the predictions for utilities and street lighting have been increased for 2019/20 as the Council's energy broker has indicated that prices have risen and are likely to continue until Brexit has settled nerves. An increase in staff costs has been included as the NJC announced last year that for 2019/20 they will be addressing the issue of differentials on the pay scale. This was triggered by the introduction of the National Living Wage which has compressed the lower end of the NJC pay spine with supervisors often being paid only a little more than those they supervise and grades no longer reflecting the value of jobs. The NJC board has not yet agreed the pay award, but with cost of living running at 2.2% and salaries having been subject to a cap for 7 or 8 years it seems a reasonable estimate. Brexit remains an area of uncertainty. The Finance Officer had raised concerns that the budgets have become very tight, and it will be crucial to include finance for any additional projects/expenditure the Council may have in mind for 2019/20.

The document was used to guide members' deliberations. It showed that should members wish to restrict the Council Tax to 3% the predicted figure to balance the budget would be in the region of £115,000 over the next 4 years, which would need to be taken from Council reserves.

Agreed: that as the proposal does not include any funding allocations for projects, from Item 10 or the costs of the succession plan Item 11 that further consideration should be given to these elements before a final decision is made. This exercise to be undertaken on the same night as the review of the long medium and short term plan.

**9. TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE LEVEL OF PRECEPT INCREASE, ON THE BASIS OF THE ABOVE PLANS, TO GUIDE COMMITTEES' BUDGET SETTING PROCESSES (September meeting)**

Agreed: to advise committee Chairmen to ensure their committees are realistic and prudent with any proposed increases, and to ensure that all exceptional items are included. Funds from the unallocated reserves to be used to limit the rise in the precept to 3%.

**10. TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON POLICY AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE TO COUNCIL**

Agreed: not to make changes to the policy and if necessary to propose allocations from the Capital Fund following the review of the long, medium, and short term plans.

**11. TO REVIEW THE STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF THE COUNCIL**

Members are aware of the importance of succession management to ensure that the upcoming retirements can be smoothly managed.

Agreed: that the cost impacts of review of the groundstaff and the developing succession plan should be included in the five year budget projection.

**12. PRESS RELEASE**

There were no items on which the Committee wished to publish a press release.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm