



**Minutes of a meeting of the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee held on Tuesday 14 January 2025 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, East Street, Wareham at 7.30pm.**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors K Critchley (Vice Chairman), B Dean, S Dean, V Green and R Holloway.

**Officers present:** N Gray, Town Clerk and RFO, S Dickens, Deputy Town Clerk

**Also present:** Cllr M Cotton, Cllr A Dallimore, Cllr D Robinson and Cllr M Hill.

**PRF 045/25      Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Z Gover, Cllr D Budd, Cllr M Tighe, Cllr L Kirk and Cllr S Wheatley.

In Cllr Gover's absence, the Vice Chairman, Cllr K Critchley, chaired the meeting.

**PRF 046/25      Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**PRF 047/25      Public participation time**

There were no members of the public present.

**PRF 048/25      Confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee, held on 12 November 2024, were **APPROVED** and would be signed by the Chairman following the meeting.

**PRF 049/25      Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting**

There were no matters arising.

**PRF 050/25      Payment of outstanding creditors**

It was **RESOLVED** that the payments to creditors in the sum of £66,272.80 be **APPROVED**.

**PRF 051/25      Bank Reconciliation – October, November and December 2024**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the bank reconciliations for October, November and December 2024.

**PRF 052/25      Budget Monitoring – Q3**

Members considered the Q3 budget position for the 2024/25 financial year.

The Clerk advised that the financial position for quarter 3 remained positive with the budget on track to make a saving in-year. Expenditure was down on budget, but receipts were also slightly down on budget. The final quarter would be crucial to the year's finances, and it was hoped the position would remain positive.

The Q3 budget position for the 2024/25 financial year was **NOTED**.

**PRF 053/25      Interim Audit Report**

Members considered the internal audit report 2024/25, following the internal auditor's first visit in December, and the subsequent management responses.

The Clerk noted the initial visit had been achieved in less than expected time, due to the efficient systems now in place. Only two recommendations had been made

to Council, both of which were administrative had been responded to within the report and actioned as appropriate.

The Interim Audit Report was NOTED.

**PRF 054/25      Transfer of Funds to CCLA**

The Clerk advised that the transfer of £500,000 into the new CCLA account required a resolution from the PR&F committee.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the transfer of £500,000 to the high interest CCLA account.

**PRF 055/25      2025/26 Draft Budget and Precept Setting**

The Clerk presented the draft budget noting the individual lines had already been presented and considered to the Committee at its November 2024 meeting, with Amenities considering their budget line responsibilities in October 2024. No changes had been made to those agreed lines.

The earmarked reserves were included in the draft budget and the Clerk explained the rationale behind the 4 additional earmarked reserves. Members agreed the budget was a sensible approach to Council’s income and expenditure for the year ahead.

The Clerk explained the impact of the budget to the precept being requested, noting that although the percentage was 6.97%, this equated to £16.13 per annum on a Band D property, or 31p per week, or 4p per day. This would be less for bands A-C and more for bands E-H. The Clerk further explained the impact of the Dorset Council second homes adjustment which had gifted the Town a small automatic precept increase.

The Clerk requested that members consider the careful balance of rising costs to utilities, national insurance and the number of major projects which were in the pipeline and due to come to fruition in the following 12 to 18 months, which would deplete the earmarked reserves dramatically. Furthermore, a zero increase in precept would result in a greater precept rise in future years, which would impact residents far more than smaller incremental rises.

Members considered the proposed precept noting the need to balance the budget and provide good services and opportunities for Wareham, and it was felt that asking for a small increase to have a vibrant town with advancing projects was preferable to no increase which would see the town remain stagnant.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to full council the approval of the proposed draft budget and proposed precept increase of 6.97%.

**PRF 056/25      Any other items the Chairman deems urgent**

The were no items deemed urgent.

**PRF 057/25      Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee was scheduled to be held at 7.30pm on **Tuesday 11 March 2025**.

Chairman..... Date.....

Initials.....