

QUEENSFERRY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF FINANCE MEETING HELD ON 8th JANUARY 2024, AT SANDYCROFT COMMUNITY CENTRE, PHOENIX STREET, SANDYCROFT, CH5 2PD.

PRESENT: Councillors: Mrs. C. Jones (Chair), Mrs. P. Connah, Mrs. D. Milner, Ms. K. Perry, Mrs. P. Titley, Mrs. S. Salisbury, Mr. T. Williams, Mr. D. Wisinger.

Mrs. C. Hughes – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

F1/24 APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

Apologies were received from Councillors: Mr. C. Bowden, Mr. B. Connah, Mr. M. Hughes, Mrs. L. Povey.

RESOLVED – that the apologies be received and accepted. That the meeting was quorate.

F2/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

F3/24 TO ENDORSE THE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE MEETING HELD ON 26th SEPTEMBER 2023 (PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED BY EMAIL)

Councillor Mr. D. Wisinger proposed the minutes as an accurate record, seconded by Councillor Mrs. P. Connor.

RESOLVED – that the draft minutes of the meeting of Finance meeting held on 26th September 2023 be approved as final and confirmed as an accurate record.

F4/24 MATTERS ARISING

None.

F5/24 BUDGET FORECAST 2023-24

The Clerk discussed the proposed budget forecast with Councillors which had been circulated prior to the meeting. Changes were agreed as follows:

- Street light renewal to be increased from £2000.00 each to £2300.00 each meaning an increase in the current budget allocation from £8000.00 to £9200.00.
- Summer playscheme to be increased from £1700.00 to £1915.80 to account for price increases.
- Coronation activities £2000.00 to be removed from budget allocation as this is no longer required.

- Christmas activities to be increased from £1500.00 to £2000.00 to include yearly events (e.g. Scarecrow Festival).
- Staff costs to be increased from £13,000.00 to £15,000.00 to account for former Clerk's settlement, changes to National Insurance and 2023-24 pay award.
- Insurance premium to be increased from £1450.00 to £1500.00 to account for price increases.
- Telephone/Broadband £300.00 to be removed from budget allocation as no longer required.

Flood/Winter Weather Emergency remains at £400.00. The Clerk advised that a Flooding Resilience Grant had recently been received from FCC, however decisions had not yet been made in relation to how this would be spent. The Chair asked the Clerk to clarify whether there are any specific criteria that FCC were aware of in relation to what the grant could be spent on.

The Chair proposed that a special meeting of the Council be held with representatives from the Community Flood Action Group and professionals such as NRW to discuss the preparation of a Community Flood Plan. Councillors agreed with this suggestion and a proposed date of Tuesday 30th January, 7pm at Sandycroft Community Centre was put forward. This proposal would be put forward to Council at the Ordinary meeting on Tuesday 9th January when representatives from the Community Flood Action Group were due to be in attendance.

RESOLVED –

- That the budget forecast allocation be amended as outlined above and recirculated to Councillors.
- That the precept be increased from £38,000 to £40,000 to take account of increased costs of street lighting renewals.
- That a special meeting would be proposed with representatives from the Community Flood Action Group and professionals such as NRW to discuss the preparation of a Community Flood Plan, pending formal agreement at the Ordinary Meeting of the Council on 9th January 2024.

ACTIONS –

- Clerk to make amendments outlined above to the budget forecast and recirculate to Councillors.
- Clerk to complete and return the precept form to FCC requesting an increase from £38,000 to £40,000 ahead of the deadline on 25th January 2024.
- Clerk to clarify with FCC whether there are any criteria in relation to what the Flooding Resilience Grant can be spent on.
- Clerk to invite relevant professionals to the flood meeting planned for 30th January once this had been confirmed at the Ordinary Meeting of the Council on 9th January 2024.

F6/24 COMMUNITY AND TOWN COUNCILS - COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES - HOMEWORKING ARRANGEMENTS AND CONSUMABLES

The Clerk had circulated updated information to Councillors prior to the meeting from the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales regarding Councillor allowances, homeworking arrangements and consumables. Forms are available from the Clerk should Councillors wish to claim allowances.

RESOLVED – That updated information regarding Councillor allowances, homeworking arrangements and consumables be noted.

F7/24 NATIONAL PAY AGREEMENT 2023/24

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) pay award 2023/24 had been received in relation to Local Government Services pay agreement and rates of pay, applicable from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The Clerk had circulated copies of the pay award details and salary scales to Councillors prior to the meeting. Councillors discussed and agreed that the pay award should be applied to the Clerk's salary, meaning that the hourly rate would increase from £15.30 per hour to £16.67 per hour. The spinal point remains the same (SCP 23).

RESOLVED – That the Pay Award should be approved and applied to the Clerk's salary.

ACTION – Clerk to inform Payroll by email cc Chair.

F8/24 SECTION 137 EXPENDITURE LIMIT FOR 2024/25

A letter from Welsh Government outlining the appropriate sum under section 137(4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 v- Section 137 Expenditure Limit for 2024-25 had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. The letter outlined that:

The appropriate sum for the purposes of section 137(4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 (the 1972 Act) for Community and Town Councils in Wales for the financial year 2024-25 is £10.81. Section 137(1) of the 1972 Act permits each Community or Town Council to incur expenditure for purposes for which it has no other specific powers if the Council considers that the expenditure is in the interests of, and will bring direct benefit to, the area or any part of it, or all or some of its inhabitants, providing that the benefit is commensurate with the expenditure incurred. Community and Town Councils are also permitted under section 137(3) to incur expenditure for certain charitable and other purposes. The maximum expenditure that can be incurred under both section 137(1) and (3) for the financial year 2024-25 will be £10.81 per elector. For the financial year 2024-25, the appropriate sum for the purposes of section 137(4)(a) is calculated by applying the formula set out in Schedule 12B to the 1972 Act. The Retail Prices Index increased by 8.86% between September 2022 and September 2023. This means that, by application of the formula, the appropriate sum for the financial year 2024- 25 increases from £9.93 to £10.81 per elector.

RESOLVED – That the increase in the appropriate sum for financial year 2024-25 be noted.

F9/24 TOWN / COMMUNITY COUNCIL PRECEPTS 2024/25

At a meeting of Flintshire County Council's Cabinet on 21st November 2023, members approved the Council Tax Base for 2024-25. A letter had been received from the Revenues Manager at FCC to advise Council that QCC's Council Tax Band 'D' Tax Base had been calculated to be 708.85. The Clerk had circulated the letter to Councillors prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED –

- That the Council Tax Base be noted.
- That the precept be increased to £40,000 to take account of increased costs of street lighting renewals.

ACTION – Clerk to submit Precept request to FCC by the deadline on 25th January 2024.

F10/24 FLINTSHIRE 2024 PLAYSCHHEME AND COMMUNITY PROVISIONS COSTS

Updated playscheme and community provisions costs had been received from FCC. The Clerk had circulated this information to Councillors prior to the meeting. It was noted that in 2023 a total of 178 children attended the Playscheme over a 3-week period. The daily average attendance rate was 11.9, with a total number of 46 children registered.

To enable the Council to budget in advance, FCC were offering to hold costs at set levels, if the Council signed up to a 3-year commitment. This was subject to the Council being able to honour the costs set over a 3-year period.

RESOLVED – To fund the Playscheme for 3 weeks and to enter into a 3-year commitment with FCC, subject to FCC being able to honour the costs.

ACTIONS –

- Clerk to inform FCC of Playscheme requirements.
- Clerk to invite Officers from FCC who oversee the Playscheme to the Council meeting in April to discuss communications and awareness raising to promote the Playscheme.

F11/24 COST OF LIVING – COMMUNITY AND TOWN COUNCIL ACTIVITY IN WALES

The Clerk updated Councillors on a new Cost of Living Crisis Team established by One Voice Wales. One Voice Wales has secured funding via Welsh Government to look at the challenges being posed to Welsh communities in light of the cost-of-living crisis. The programme runs until March 2026. A letter from the Chief Executive at One Voice Wales regarding cost-of-living Community and Town Council activity in Wales and information about the project team members had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. One Voice Wales have also circulated a cost-of-living crisis survey

to Clerks. The purpose of the survey is to understand the Council’s current activities based around community engagement and cost-of-living initiatives.

ACTION – Clerk to complete cost-of-living survey by the closing date 19th January 2024.

F12/24 TO CONSIDER REQUESTS FOR GRANT PAYMENTS

The following requests for assistance with funding had been received:

- (a) Urdd – request for a donation towards the National Eisteddfod Maldwyn 2024.
- (b) British Heart Foundation – request for donation towards their Go Red campaign.
- (c) War Memorial Institute – request for assistance with funding in 2024.

RESOLVED –

- That a £50 donation is submitted to the Urdd and British Heart Foundation.
- That grant funding had been agreed in principle for the War Memorial Institute and Sandycroft Community Centre, subject to formal approval by the Council in financial year 2024-25.

F13/24 TO APPROVE ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Payment references 80-87 totalling £1035.71 were approved for payment at the meeting:

| | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|--|---------|
| 80 | HMRC | December 2023 payment | £8.04 |
| 81 | Sandycroft Community Centre Committee | Sky Connect Wi Fi | £20.34 |
| 82 | Carla Hughes | Clerk's salary January 2024 | £679.07 |
| 83 | HMRC | January 2024payment | £163.20 |
| 84 | Carla Hughes | Reimbursement for printer ink | £22.50 |
| 85 | Cllr Pat Connah | Reimbursement for Council Christmas tree to be chipped and recycled and hotdog rolls for turning on Christmas lights event | £42.56 |
| 86 | Urdd Gobaith Cymru | Donation towards National Eisteddfod Maldwyn 2024 | £50 |
| 87 | British Heart Foundation | Donation towards Go Red campaign | £50 |

RESOLVED – Invoices authorised for payment. A transfer of £5000 to be made from one account to another, to pay invoices received in January 2024.

F14/24 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

F15/24 DATE OF NEXT PROPER FINANCE MEETING

9th April 2024, 6.30pm, Sandycroft Community Centre.

The meeting opened at 7pm and closed at 8.51pm

..... Signed Chair of Finance Committee

..... Date