

**MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY
13 JANUARY 2020 at 7:00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillors Wells (Chairman), Smith (Mayor), Biscoe (Deputy Mayor), Mrs Callen, Mrs Carlyon, Mrs Eathorne-Gibbons, Rich, Roden and Ms Southcombe

Also in attendance: Roger Gazzard, Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer
Ms Joanne Trevelyan, Financial Officer
Councillor Allen
Taren-Lee Corin, Events coordinator
Caitlyn Martin, Office apprentice

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mrs Cox (Vice-Chairman) and Mrs Stokes

301 DISCLOSURE OR DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Wells (Chairman) declared an interest in matters relating to Young People Cornwall (YPC) on the grounds of him being a director and trustee of the organisation. Councillor Wells (Chairman) declared an interest in matters related to Kenwyn & St Allen parochial church council on the grounds of his role as vice Chairman.

302 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 18 November 2019, having been before Council on 09 December 2019, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

303 TRURO EVENTS

The Events coordinator presented the schedule of events for 2020 – 2021 with the estimated time required for the preparations and the delivery of each event. Members were requested to note that all events were executed solely by the current event coordinator who did not have any further capacity to deliver any additional events in 2020. With a continual expectation to deliver additional events, the level of involvement and work needed to execute them successfully could not be offered. The Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer highlighted that an events assistant to support the events coordinator would create time for events to be planned, delivered and all necessary administration managed successfully. An events assistant would be partly funded by Truro City Council and the Business District Development (BID) team on the condition that a number of BID's events were taken on by the TCC events team. Councillors agreed that events in the city would have a positive impact when town centres were on a steady decline. Councillor Mrs Carlyon suggested that, in her opinion, members would need to meet with the Events Coordinator to discuss and strategically plan for events and to establish where money spent to employ an additional member for the events team could be recovered to the Council through increased revenue. The Events Coordinator agreed, that with more time available, she would create a long-term strategic plan that would be aligned with the Council's long-term plan for the town. Councillor Smith (Mayor) highlighted that this plan would be devised through consultation with the recently created Truro Youth Council. The Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer assured Councillor Mrs Carlyon that marquees would be paid for by the external event organisers and not the City Council. The City Council would be liable to pay to hire a marquee only when it would be used for an event that the City Council delivered. Councillor Mrs Callen expressed disappointment as to the level of new events planned for the coming year and highlighted that the City Council could perhaps take revenue for operating events alongside the planned events being organised by external organisers. Councillor Mrs Callen continued to request details regarding the carousel that had been a permanent form of children's entertainment for a number of years. The

Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer confirmed that the carousel had a licence in place and that its position depended on the location the City Council allocated it. Members of the Committee discussed the necessity of creating events all around the city not just on Lemon Quay in an attempt to bring people into the city. Members considered how encouraging people to live in the city would also bring life back to the city and events such as the BID fashion show facilitated trade for local business and independent retailers. Members were keen for this, and similar events that promoted the city, be developed.

The Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer confirmed that the Cheese shop near St Georges Road had agreed that a notice board be erected and that this would soon be ordered. Additional notice boards would be erected outside Hendra Shop, the Green toilets once refurbished and another outside the library main entrance; following listed building consent. This would be an asset for the City Council whilst the main Council notice board outside the Municipal Buildings had been covered by scaffolding.

Councillors thanked the Events coordinator for attending the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting and it was noted that the proposed additional member of staff was included in the estimate figures.

304 TOWN CLERK/RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT DRAFT ESTIMATES 2020/2021

The Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer introduced and presented the Finance and General Purposes Committee with the draft Estimates report for 2020/21, having been previously circulated. He confirmed that the Parks and Amenities Committee estimates had been approved with two subjects particularly being discussed.

Idless Nursery

The nursery would open next year, and operations were discussed with a view of the costs of power and water. The budget reflected the same costs as the current year with a view to this changing when commercially growing and selling more plants could be increased. The operational costs would also increase as a result of this.

Green Street toilets

Designs for the refurbishment of the toilets had been considered although a budget price had yet to be received from the advisors. There was currently a budget of £10k which had been a contribution linked to the 10-year plan and would fund repayments on £120K of borrowing for the refurbishment work. There was a statutory restriction on the minimum amount of borrowing based on the number of electors in a town; approximately £80k. Based on this, and dependent upon the budget price for the Green Street refurbishment, the Council may need to add the refurbishment of a second toilet block prior to applying for borrowing approval.

The Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer presented the Finance and General Purposes Committee estimates highlighting the following points.

Social Prescribing

The Social Prescriber had not been allocated a budget as the project would end in the early summer; the latest six-month report would be presented to the Finance and General Purposes committee meeting in February. Stakeholders believed that this initiative had been a great success and, due to the success of the work, Feock parish council had been selected to move to the 'Haire' project; an initiative to bring the elderly and children together. Some members voiced concern as to the continuation of some of the initiatives that had brought benefits to Truro residents. They highlighted that residents had attended the groups instead of using their GP and volunteers had invested time to get the support up and running and they felt concern about would happen to the attendees if the groups were to stop. This project had been taken on by the City Council and partners and there would be a responsibility towards attendees and their wellbeing.

The Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer believed that the NHS would support the City Council and continue to support initiatives based on the social prescribing project should the council decide it would like to continue some elements of the project. In his opinion some stakeholders in the wider health economy had not recognised the importance or the contribution Town Councils could make in the increase in social prescribing work in the community and therefore money had not been set aside in their budgets to continue it. Councillors discussed whether the community development team would have any capacity to support the running of the groups that had been created to support the social prescribing project based on the assumption that the NHS would be unable to address the social prescriber project for at least 12 months. The Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer confirmed that he would contact the NHS to enquire about their commitment and support to invest in the continuation of the initiatives created in support of the Social Prescriber project. In addition, he would circulate the six-month report to all councillors prior to the Council Precept meeting.

National Pay Award

The City Council pays employees the 'Living Wage Foundation Wage rate as a minimum' and this would increase on 1 April to £9.30 per hour. However, the National Pay Award for other employees would not be reviewed until the autumn at the earliest but an estimate for this had been built into the budget for this. All payments would be backdated to the 1st April once a decision had been made. The three-year pension actuarial review had stated that the pension fund was at a positive level and had agreed that pension contributions, currently 18.75%, would not increase over the next three years; nor would the lump sum payment of £24,500.

Changes to the budget

During the next financial year, the offices would return to the Municipal Buildings in December and the 2021-2022 budget would require an additional £36k to move back. Once this happened there would also be an increase in insurance and loan repayment costs needed for the 50% the Council had been charged for the building works. Councillor Biscoe (Deputy Mayor) requested a schedule of work and a report reflecting the works that had, and would be done, so Councillors had a good understanding of where the money would be spent.

Municipal Offices

Cornwall Council had reimbursed to the City Council the income lost to not having the possibility to hire out the rooms in the Municipal Offices. This had been anticipated for the following year.

Tourist Information Centre (TIC)

Since moving to the new premises TIC revenue had increased substantially. Overheads continued to be high, but a retail surplus had been made which members felt were promising. The Truro Guide had made a loss and discussions were currently underway to find a way to move forward to further reduce costs; this could include reducing the guide to one per year.

Moresk Centre

The Council had agreed to the devolution of this building and £88k would be taken from the property fund with a view to repaying it back over a period of five years, to refurbish the building and bring it to a good standard of use. The agreement with Churches Together in Truro had been to provide financial support for them to manage the building for the first two years. Tenders were being prepared for the refurbishment of the building.

Library

A saving had been made due to the delay in the devolution of the service and building but there had been an increase to staffing costs going forward that had not been anticipated in the budget. There are currently five tenants in the library building that generated rent for the Council and, in 2021 when the leases ended, would be reviewed to include some service charges. Money had been transferred from the revenue account £240k had been ring fenced and was in the reserved account until the Council chose how to use it.

Library rooms

Some members questioned whether the revised costs for library room hire would exclude community groups from using them. These costs would become an obstacle for community groups and would not reflect the library as a community service.

The Events Coordinator highlighted that she had explored rates for room hire in the City and should the room costs be reduced then the rooms would become booked for community groups and the Council would not be using them as a method to receive income. She highlighted that there were other rooms available to hire around the City one being the Pydar Pop-up which when used, confirmed to Cornwall Council the need for it remaining as a community asset. Council Rich highlighted that there were other spaces available where community groups could meet including Trelander community centre, the People's Palace and the Malpas centre; sometimes free of charge. In his opinion any of these meeting places could be offered to potential groups seeking a meeting place in Truro. Councillor Wells (Chairman) highlighted that it would be important to consider the detriment to the Council with a reduction of the room hire costs in reflection of the upcoming increase in council tax. Should room hire be reduced the Council would need to demonstrate the necessity of this.

Councillor Roden reflected upon the rates in the estimates for the Municipal Buildings and confirmed that he had been approached by some organisations stating that the costs to hire rooms in the library were relatively high and had needed to resort to organising meeting spaces outside the City.

After discussion Councillor Roden proposed, seconded by Councillor Smith (Mayor) and

RECOMMENDED that

- (i) The rate for the Municipal room hire for charities and community groups in the estimates report be used for the Library room hire for the next year

The Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer asked members of the Committee to consider the levels of contributions proposed to the Finance committee funds.

Following discussion, it was moved by the Chairman and

RECOMMENDED that

- (i) the revised estimates for 2019-20 be approved;
- (ii) the estimates for 2020-21 be approved;
- (iii) the financial forecasts for 2021-22 and 2022-23 be agreed in principle;
- (iv) contributions to the Committee Funds be approved.

Councillor Mrs Carlyon asked for her name to be recorded as having voted against the above recommendation.

305 CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was received

The meeting closed at 8:33 pm

CHAIRMAN