

WESTBURY TOWN COUNCIL

**AT THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT THE LAVERTON,
BRATTON ROAD, WESTBURY ON MONDAY, 9th DECEMBER 2013 AT 7.00 PM.**

PRESENT: Cllr D Bradshaw (Chairman)
Cllrs Mrs S Ezra, D Jenkins, Mrs C Mitchell and F Morland.
Mr K Harvey, Town Clerk, and Mrs B Mantle.

**Also in attendance: Cllrs I Cunningham, G King and W D Tout
Mr D Kemp, DCK Beavers Ltd**

Members of the public: Nil.

F.113 PUBLIC FORM Nil.

F.114 ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE.
Cllr S Andrews – Personal
Cllr R Hawker – Business
Cllr D Windess – Unwell

F.115 DISPENSATIONS. Nil.

F.116 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.
Agenda Item 11 – Small Grants 2013-2014:
Cllr Mrs S Ezra: Personal – White Horse Day Centre and Westbury (Wilts)
Welfare of the Elderly Association.
Cllr Mrs C Mitchell: Personal – White Horse Day Centre and Westbury
(Wilts) Welfare of the Elderly Association.
Cllr D Jenkins: Personal – Westbury Rugby Club

F.117 MINUTES. The Minutes of the Finance Committee held on the 14th October 2013 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

F.118 MATTERS ARISING FROM THESE MINUTES. Cllr Morland questioned why the outcome of Wiltshire Council's Cabinet meeting on the Council Tax Support Grant was not reported under this item. The Clerk responded that he had sent out to councillors all communications received from Wiltshire Council regarding its decision to set the council tax support grant for 2014/15 at 65% of the 2013/14 grant, together with the report on the consultation held.

Members Matters Arising. Nil.

F.119 CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS FOR REPORT. Nil.

F.120 NOTICE of MOTION received from Cllr G King dated 20th November 2013.

To increase the grant for Crosspoint from £2,000 to £4,000 in 2014/2015.

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It was RESOLVED to approve the increase in grant for Crosspoint from £2,000 to £4,000 in 2014/15, and furthermore, due to this increase in funding, it was agreed not to consider their small grant application.

F.121 NOTICE of MOTION received from the Tourism Working Group dated 3rd October 2013.

To consider a budget bid of £5,000 for the continuing maintenance of the White Horse.

On advice from Mr D Kemp, it was RESOLVED to fund future maintenance of the Westbury White Horse from the Rolling Capital Programme, as and when any project is proposed to the Town Council. On behalf of the Tourism Working Group, Cllr Jenkins withdrew the motion.

F.122 ANNUAL TOWN CLOCK SERVICE – SMITH of DERBY. In the light of additional information, Town Council at its meeting on the 4th November requested the Finance Committee to reconsider its earlier decision (F.108) to enter into a six year service agreement with Smith of Derby Ltd in order to take advantage of a 15% discount for payment in advance. On consideration of Smith of Derby's annual accounts up to 31.12.2012, as submitted to Companies House, and report by Cllr I Cunningham, it was RESOLVED not to enter into any maintenance agreements with this company.

F.123 DRAFT BUDGET 2014/15. Mr D Kemp, DCK Beavers Ltd, attended to give assistance with budget setting, and to advise on the consequences of Wiltshire Council's recent cut in the Council Tax Support Grant made to this Council.

Mr Kemp reported that the view being taken by principal councils across the country varies. Some authorities passed no grant on last year, ie Swindon Borough Council, who kept the grant for themselves. For 2014/15, quite a few more have taken this decision. Others such as Wiltshire have adopted a mechanism of phasing it out over varying periods of two to five years. What members need to be aware of is that the money coming to principal authorities to offset the cost to principal authorities and towns and parishes, following the changes in the benefit support arrangements introduced last year, is exactly the same amount for 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17, and the individual division of this between principal authorities has not changed from 2013/14. So Wiltshire Council has exactly the same as they had in 2013/14. What has changed is the total amount of income support settlement. Wiltshire Council has reduced its grant by 35% for 2014/15, and this is what most authorities are quoting to towns and parishes.

The other factor which needs to be considered is the question of capping. Principal authorities are capped, and the percentage for 2014/15 will be announced later this month, which is likely to be 3% (level of capping set at CPI each September). There was a suggestion at last week's Larger Councils' Conference that this regime could be applied in a limited way to town and parish councils. This was only a suggestion, and not a threat, but the officer concerned was the Deputy Director responsible for the council tax support limited means

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target. There are certain towns and parishes throughout the country where the precept represents an unreasonably large proportion of the total tax in their area, and in some instances more than 50%. It is happening in two main areas: one where districts are very rural, and in the larger towns, but also in former mining areas where towns and parishes have taken on former miners' pensions etc. It will not be universal, and will almost certainly be a variation on the mechanism applied to principal authorities, which could be applied to councils with a band 'D' figure of £74 and above, the reason being this figure is that of the smallest district authority in the country. However, ministers are still stating there will be no nasty surprises in 2014/15, but they are not ruling it out going forward. The implications for this council are that as the support grant is phased out by Wiltshire Council, there will inevitably be an unavoidable increase just to stand still. This may happen in 2015/16 when town and parishes may also be subject to capping. One of the decisions that need to be taken is whether this Council wants to anticipate the problem now and disregard the fact that Wiltshire Council is making a grant for 2014/15. If so, this council would not be alone, as at least three other towns/parishes in Wiltshire have taken the decision to assume no grant, and any grant they may get they will decide afterwards what they will do with it.

Cllr Morland mentioned a government announcement a few months ago when the average town and parish council tax increase for 2012/13 was 5.7%. The minister, who had made the announcement, considered it to be very regrettable that town and parish councils agreed these increases, and it would not happen again because the government was considering capping in 2014/15. Mr Kemp considered the key phrase was "the government was considering capping". Subsequently, the minister has assured the National Association of Local Councils that capping will not happen in 2014/15, but is being kept under review for 2015/16.

It was RESOLVED that the Draft Budget 2014/15 as submitted, excluding any council tax support grant from Wiltshire Council and as amended to reflect the increase in Grant from £2,000 to £4,000 for Crosspoint, be recommended to Town Council for approval at its meeting on 6th January 2014. Cllr Morland voted against.

F.124 SMALL GRANTS 2013-2014. It was RESOLVED to recommend to Town Council that the small grant applications for 2013/14, as amended, be approved.

F.125 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2013-2014 (First Interim).

- a. To receive and consider the Internal Audit Report 2013/14 (First Interim). Noted.
- b. Action Plan R1 to R4. The auditor's recommendations have been implemented.
- c. Action Plan R5. It was RESOLVED to make a recommendation to Town Council that the current daily transaction limit on the two Lloyds debit

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cards held by the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk be reduced from £700 to £500, and that a debit card be approved for Mr D Lawrence, Laverton Hall Development & Marketing Officer, with a daily transaction limit of £250 to enable the efficient running of the Laverton Bar.

F.126 **REPORT BY THE TOWN CLERK & RFO.** Nil.

F.127 **MONTHLY INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT – NOVEMBER.**
Noted.

9.10 pm

**Signed on behalf of the meeting
this tenth day of March 2014**

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Chairman