

Snodland Town Council – Policy and Resources

17 November 2022

Committee Members in attendance:	Cllrs J Butterfield (C), Mrs S Bell, P Hickmott, D Lettington and Mrs S Shaw.
Non Committee Members in attendance:	Mr A Bennison
Committee Members Absent with apologies:	Cllrs Mrs N Misy, Mrs K Mordecai-Woolf, Ms D King
Committee Members Absent without apologies:	
Council Staff Present:	Mrs K Sowten (CEO)
Members of the public:	None

1.	<u>Apologies for absence</u> see above
2.	<u>Declaration of Interests</u> None
3.	<u>Minutes - To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2022</u> The minutes of the meeting held on the 6 October 2022 were agreed as a true record.
4.	<u>Questions from the Public</u> <i>Pursuant to Standing Order 3 e & g Members of the public may make representation, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda. A member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes</i> There were no members of the public present
5.	<u>Audit Trail to be given by a Councillor</u> An audit trail was not available for the meeting. As previously mentioned a check list needs to be compiled, so that Councillors can be more informed of what needs to be looked at. When the Agenda goes out for the meeting the CEO will ask for a member of the Committee to carry out the audit. An audit will be carried out prior to the full council meeting in December and reported upon at full council. Cllr Hickmott to carry out this audit.
6.	<u>Financial Review</u> A copy of the financial review was sent out to members of the committee prior to the meeting, a copy is available on file. No Comments were made by Councillors.

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	<p>A copy of the Aged Debtors report was sent out to members of the committee prior to the meeting, a copy is available on file with no major issues to report. One aged debtor had settled their outstanding amount.</p> <p>Concerns were raised regarding the increased electricity costs in relation to existing tenants. The council pointed out that although they are sympathetic to the increased costs, as a public body we are unable to offer any assistance or subsidy with these increased costs. There may be some support via the Business Energy Support Scheme, however that amount has not yet been confirmed and will only be available until March 2023. For tenants that have a shared use building, it will be necessary for the electricity to be monitored on a daily basis and the costs shared between the users. The rent will also increase with RPI and this may be something that needs to be considered within the draft budget to try and support the businesses. The council were mindful of the possibility of the businesses closing down and there being no revenue raised if the buildings were then vacant.</p>
<p>7.</p> <p>0967</p>	<p><u>To Receive details of the Council Insurance renewal</u></p> <p>The Ceo reported that the renewal premium for the insurance had been received and was looking very competitive following the 3 year remarketing exercise carried out this year. Commercial Combined Insurance at £12476.91, Computer and Cyber Insurance at £1385.98 and Vehicle Insurance at £2112.51. However following a revaluation of the Councils properties rebuilding costs which has just been received, the insurers have had to re-evaluate the Commercial Combined Insurance premium and at the time of the meeting the revised figure had not been received. Early indications are that the total premium will still be lower than the budgeted figure for 2022 of £18859.</p> <p>RESOLVED If the Commercial Combined Insurance figure is lower than the budget figure of £18895 to accept the insurance renewal, however if the figure is higher than the budget allocation an email should be sent to committee members advising them of the revised cost.</p>
<p>8.</p> <p>0968</p>	<p><u>To consider electricity and Gas renewal prices</u></p> <p>The electricity renewal report was distributed prior to the meeting. The CEO advised that the prices had gone down since the report had been distributed and in view of this and as previously agreed with the Council the CEO was given consent to renew, the contract had been signed to achieve the better rate. A revised report is available on file.</p> <p>RESOLVED to accept the renewal of the electricity contracts for one year retrospectively due to the reduced rates achieved.</p> <p>The CEO reported that the gas contract for the Devonshire Rooms which was discussed at the last meeting and the Council gave consent to allow the CEO to accept the best possible rate on a fixed one year term once the broker has come back with figures. The rates received from the broker were very favourable and had achieved a saving of around one third. The contract had been signed for one year to achieve the better rate.</p>

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0969	RESOLVED to accept the renewal of the gas contract for the Devonshire Rooms for one year retrospectively due to the reduced rates achieved.
9.	<p><u>To receive the KCC Audit review report (this will be dependent upon the report being received from KCC)</u></p> <p>The CEO advised that the KCC audit report had not yet been received from the Auditor and would be reported at Full Council.</p>
10.	<p><u>To consider the First Draft Budget</u></p> <p>The CEO presented the first draft budget, a copy is available on file. The CEO highlighted the major changes reflected in the 2023/24 budget which included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in salaries due to non recruitment of an additional member of office staff. • Decrease in other staffing costs due to the non acceptance of a shared community engagement officer. • Reduction in insurance costs due to a full remarketing exercise which took place in November 2022 which led to a saving. • Renewal of gas and electricity contracts have led to a huge increase in costs. • Snodland Partnership grant has been suspended for the 2023/24 year. • Income from Brooklands Car Park has been lost due to non renewal by South East Water for the use. • Maintenance budgets have been reduced and any significant maintenance will need to come from the repairs and renewal budget. • No consideration has been given to any new projects during 2023/24. Any projects considered will need to come from general reserves. • Overall 10% inflation increase across the budget. <p>The council acknowledged the non recruitment of a new member of staff and should consider what the organisation needs to run efficiently rather than keeping the budget down and advised the CEO that should the workload become too much, then the council would need to review the budget with a view to using some of the general reserves.</p> <p>The CEO advised of a number of changes to gas and electric contracts and insurance costs since the budget was drafted and these will need to be revised.</p> <p>The CEO went through the Revenue and Capital advising the Committee of the earmarked reserve held by the council. The Committee were aware that the general reserves of the council comprises of its cash flow and contingency fund to cover unexpected inflation, unforeseen events and unusual circumstances. The generally accepted recommendation with regards to general reserves is around 3 months of net revenue expenditure, and no more than twice the precept.</p>

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	Taking into consideration the adjustments that need to be made and bearing in mind the current financial climate it was recommended that a zero increase in the precept should be sought.
	<u>Correspondence</u> None
	THE COMMITTEE HAS AGREED That in view of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be Temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.
10.	<u>To authorise payment of 2022, pay increase and backdated pay to staff following the announcement of salary increase for 2022 by National Joint Council for Local Government Services</u> The Committee noted the contractual pay increase to be paid to staff and backdated to April 2022.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 20:33