

MINUTES OF THE CHOPPINGTON PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23 JANUARY 2019 IN STAKEFORD AND BOMARSUND SPORTS AND SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE

THOSE ATTENDING:

Cllr H Allsopp
Cllr E A Barrell
Cllr J Foster
Cllr K Grimes
Cllr G Huntley
Cllr A Iley
Cllr J Rowell
Cllr P S Vaughan, Chairman

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr D L Nicholson JP, Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer and Ms A Brindley, Deputy Parish Clerk.

AGENDA PART 1

C053/19 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apology for absence was received from Cllr L Watson (family commitments). The meeting accepted this apology, agreeing they were proper reasons for absence.

C054/19 2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY AND OTHER REGISTERABLE PERSONAL INTEREST(S)

Cllr A Iley indicated that he has a personal interest that will prohibit him from participating in any discussion relating to administrative support staff. If such a discussion was to take place he gave notice that he would withdraw from the meeting for the duration of that discussion.

C055/19 3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS.

None received.

C056/19 4. TO CONSIDER THE PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2019/20

The Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer explained that the Parish Council is required to set a balanced budget, determine the level of

precept and to advise Northumberland County Council of this requirement.

4.1 Context

On establishment Choppington Parish Council embraced the principles of community governance, resolving to engage with its various communities and to deliver only those services and standards as directed by the community. The Parish Council receives guidance on service standards and the level of precept from the Residents Panel. This is often referred to as participative budgeting and Choppington Parish Council is considered to be the largest local council in England to adopt participative budgeting in respect of its total expenditure. Choppington Parish Council has been recognised as an exemplar for the development of local services through community partnership and supports other authorities who want to develop community participation in budgeting.

The Parish Council's Financial Plan and budget has been received by the Residents Panel who have supported expenditure plans and agreed a 3.2% rise in precept. Previously the Parish Council has conducted a survey of all residents, which resulted in the Residents Panel directing that the precept required to fund local services should not exceed £425,000 during the period 2017/18 to 2021/22. This direction was given after the Residents Panel had received the interim results from the residents survey (2016), which showed overwhelming support for the proposal to constrain the precept and to limit any new service responsibilities to the agreed strategic priorities of:

1. To maintain and develop the local environment
2. To provide opportunities for older people
3. To develop services for younger people
4. To support the development of local facilities to meet these needs

The Parish Council's financial strategy for the period to 2021/22 recognises the continuing financial pressures that Northumberland County Council faces arising from continued national austerity. As a direct consequence of Central Government austerity measures Northumberland County Council will continue to reduce in both size and capacity in real terms of the services they provide and the financial resources they have to direct. It is anticipated that by 2019/20 NCC will be approximately half the size it was in 2009.

Central Government is encouraging the transfer of services from principal authorities to local councils. Under 'localism' authorities such as Choppington Parish Council are being encouraged to work creatively with their communities to deliver these services at lower costs. Members are asked to consider the direction being given by local residents in relation to the transfer of services and to develop an

appropriate mechanism for the consideration of any transfer of responsibilities from Northumberland County Council.

The Parish Council, although considered large by Northumberland standards is in fact in a small local authority when compared to district or borough councils. As such it needs to accept that value for money criteria and lack of capacity restricts the range of services it can deliver or support.

4.2 Financial Strategy – 2019/20 to 2021/22

In developing a financial strategy for the period 2019/20 to 2020/21, the Parish Council has considered:

1. The views of the Residents Panel that the precept for 2019/20 should not exceed £395,342.
2. Community/residents priorities
3. The economic circumstances of the area
4. Value for money
5. National priorities for local government and service transfers
6. The impact of future demands on the Parish Council precept

Members gave detailed consideration to the budget for 2019/20 and supporting papers.

Cllr A Iley withdrew from the meeting and did not participate in any discussions concerning staffing issues relating to administrative and financial support.

RESOLVED:

- 1. Members agreed to support the direction given by the Residents Panel in relation to the management of resources and for the delivery of services for the period 2019/20 to 2021/22.**
- 2. Members agreed the budget for 2019/2020 as considered by the Residents Panel on 16 January 2019.**

C057/17 4. TO SET THE PARISH COUNCIL PRECEPT FOR 2019/2020

The Responsible Finance Officer advised that following adoption of the budget for 2019/20 and the allocation of £250000.00 towards asset replacement/repair and projects the total anticipated expenditure for the financial year is £744,886 and that a precept for the year of £395,342 is required to support that expenditure.

RESOLVED:

- 1. Members agreed to set the precept for 2019/20 at £395,342 as supported by the Residents Panel on 16 January 2019.**
- 2. The Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer was directed to advise Northumberland County Council of this requirement.**
- 3. The Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer was given delegated powers to finalise all contracts and service level agreements as directed by the adopted budget and to develop business plans for the delivery of services for 2019/20.**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21.10

Chairman

Dated