

Minutes of an EGM of  
Yarm Town Council held at  
**The Fellowship Hall (side entrance)**  
**West Street, Yarm TS15 9BT.**  
**Date: Friday 26th January 2024 Time: 4pm**  
Members of the public were invited to  
attend the meeting  
COVID Guidance at the time applied.  
**Juliet Johnson, Proper Officer to YTC**



Yarm Town Council  
Town Hall  
High Street  
Yarm  
TS15 9AH

In accordance with the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting by any means is permitted; the Chair will notify those present of this at the start of the meeting and ask whether they agree to be filmed, recorded or photographed

## YARM TOWN COUNCIL E.G.M.

### MINUTES

#### PRESENT:

Cllr Peter Monck (Chair); Cllr Pam Smailes (Vice Chair); Cllr Philip Addison; Cllr Steve Atkinson; Cllr Marje Blair; Cllr Joyce Hardy; Cllr Brian Newcombe; Cllr Yvonne Pybus; Cllr Barbara Wegg; Cllr Robert Wegg; Town Clerk / Responsible Finance Officer (RFO); 1 member of the public.

**1.0 Notice of Meeting** - it was confirmed that public notice of the meeting has been given in accordance with schedule 12, paragraph 10 (2) of the LGA 1972.

**2.0 To appoint a Chairman in the absence of the Chair and/or Vice Chair - N/A**

**3.0 Apologies for Absence** - no apologies were received.

**4.0 Code of Conduct | Declaration of Interest | Dispensation**

- a) To record declarations of interest from members of any item to be discussed
- b) To consider, vote upon and record any requests for dispensation

**4.1 Cllrs R&B Wegg** declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in relation to any financial matters discussed in relation to Yarm Allotments. **Cllr Monck** declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to St Mary Magdalene Parish Church and matters relating to the churchyard (being a Church Warden).

**5.0 Items of Business**

**5.1 To review and discuss YTC's budget for the year 2024 / 2025 (DOCUMENTS REFER)**

**5.1.1** The Clerk addressed the meeting regarding the tasks to be achieved:

- a) to set the precept for submission to Stockton Borough Council - feedback had been received that following an informal meeting, the majority of councillors wished to vote for no increase in the precept; if this was the case (and

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councillors were aware of the impact upon use of reserves etc.) a motion could be made and a vote taken (e.g. even if some finer detail under key headings hadn't been agreed by the end of the meeting and needs further work);

- b) following this year's discussions, the Clerk advocated that the system of having a Finance and Governance (F&G) meeting focusing on budget setting should be returned to for next year (i.e. prior to discussion as part of Full Council and a following EGM), giving a whole meeting for scrutiny of the budget for all and negating need for Chairs of Committees meeting. The F&G meeting (involving all councillors) had been rejected in a previous year with a request that the work could be done 'within the normal YTC agenda' (which hasn't happened - given length of agendas etc. - & had led to Chairs of Committees meeting to offer some budget setting support to the RFO and Lead for Finance).
- c) It was stated that the first draft produced by RFO and Lead Councillor for Finance, is not a proposal as to what should happen, but simply a version to prompt discussion based on the previous year (needs based), known new spending requests or possible savings, and a 'cautious scenario' re inflation i.e. remaining at 5%. The draft budget is for discussion and 'pulling apart in order to then put back together' as per Councillors decisions. It was recognised that the process is new to many councillors hence verbal summary of the narrative report given.

#### **5.1.2** The Background of the narrative report was summarised as follows:

- a) Information as regards the inflation rate (the draft budget now contains two options for assumed inflation rate - 3% or 5% - for Councillors to discuss - other scenarios also being an option if proposed);
- b) A healthy General Reserves position is regarded as between 3 - 12 months of net budget; 6 months expenditure would be 77k (based on current discussion draft, assuming lower rate of 3% inflation, leaving reserves at 38% / 4.5 months of expenditure);
- c) Nominated reserves have been added to in each of the last few years and new nominated reserves identified last year to create a reasonable position for regularly occurring major tasks / occurrences; b) and c) together create a reasonable reserves position.
- d) Whether assuming the 3% inflation rate or 5% rate there is still a shortfall in relation to the second draft budget; the decision is therefore i) to take this from reserves, ii) achieve the balance through an increase in the precept, iii) to make further savings or iv) any combination of using reserves, precept increase and further savings.

**5.1.3** The Clerk/RFO summarised the potential savings and additional spending as featured in the 2nd Draft Budget spreadsheet and narrative report: (e.g.) taking out £4k+ event management cost (if different type/way of organising events can be agreed); savings on allotment budget i.e. reduction in skips and rent increase £1k; reducing the Town Hall Budget by £2k; saving of no longer needing the temporary office + office supplies (reduction of £4,800 + p.a.); increase re cost of CCTV p.a. (£3.9k); increase in play equipment maintenance (CCTV may help reduce this but equipment is ageing); increase in Gala costs (£8k, as previously subsidised by one-off grant); increase in Stockton Council (SBC) charge for Willey Flatts cleansing (by 51%, now £2.5k); increase in hanging baskets watering (£2.4k - may be reduced by alternative decision); increase in Town Hall electricity budget (unknown due to previous metering system); potential to allocate funding to seasonal lighting for the Town Hall; initial outlay for different arrangement for hanging baskets / floral displays (may create a saving re watering). Additional issues included: reduction to Town Hall budget (£2k) but keeping enough to show sustainability for core costs re. bid/s (National Lottery Heritage Fund and any other major bid) and also to face any as yet unconfirmed running costs; ongoing scrutiny of utility/service bills (some savings achieved) and handing back of Spital Roundabout to SBC for maintenance (a saving).

**5.1.4** Ensuing discussion included the following issues in relation to setting the budget for 2024/2025: taking out the budget for perimeter fencing at the allotments (allotments used to have no fences many years ago) and leaving this to  
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individual tenants (amendment to allotment rules and regulations potentially required for this); change to how events are organised e.g. only local / non-professional programme used (no budget has been allocated for professional programme on Christmas Eve last year '23/'24 until Business Forum offered 40% contribution; none allocated for '24/'25); effort to curb spending on Christmas Lights event - confirmation of 'Singing Christmas Tree' from SBC for '24 might reduce programming costs (if current Council want this); savings could be achieved on event management and event infrastructure costs i.e. different approach to summer events (e.g.) involving giving a grant to a local school to boost their gala as a public event rather than organising one as YTC; the role of ISAG, what it is, who sits on it and the requirement for public events i.e. it was noted that ISAG offers guidance but at the same time *requires* a submission to be approved for any event on public land throughout the borough (examples of where this does not seem to apply were given and further info from ISAG is to be sought to achieve understanding - **ACTION - Clerk**); current events management contract understood to continue until end of year - this gives time to go out to tender & seek savings whilst having compliant arrangements in place to deliver 2024 events (given point about run in times as in 2024 already, event planning, submission timelines etc.); comparator costs could be sourced as regards individual event infrastructure items (against costs supplied by events manager); a query was raised regarding Fellowship Hall insurance - this is paid by YTC and paid back by the Fellowship Hall Trust (ref. income line on budget sheet); a request for purchase of seasonal lighting for the Town Hall was referenced - could be proposed to come out of the Town Hall development budget at a later point.

**5.1.5** It was proposed that:

- a) the £4k budget line for 'Community Support/Grants' could become a saving (removed in this year's budget) and
- b) the proposal put in place for the Gala budget to become an 'Events Grant' instead (amount/s and criteria/specification to be agreed).

**PROPOSED:** Cllr Atkinson

**SECONDED:** Cllr Smailes

**AGREED**

**5.2 To review and agree YTC's precept request for 2024 / 2025 (DOCUMENTS REFERS)**

Following discussion it was proposed that

- a) the budget version assuming 5% inflation on many items should be adopted as the budget for YTC for 2024/2025 and
- b) a 3% increase in the precept (as contribution to inflation) should be requested (the precept request for 2024/2025 to Stockton Borough Council therefore being **£137,556**).

**PROPOSED:** Cllr Atkinson

**SECONDED:** Cllr Newcombe

**AGREED**

**Close of Business & Date of Next Meeting:** the next ordinary council meeting is 13.02.24.

In accordance with the Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960, press and the public shall be excluded for this item due to its confidential nature. LGA Act 1972 schedule 12 paragraph 10(2)(e). The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Sec 1 (2) - A body may, by resolution, exclude the public from a meeting (whether during the whole or part of the proceedings) whenever publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons stated in the resolution and arising from the nature of that business or of the proceedings; and where such a resolution is passed, this Act shall not require the meeting to be open to the public during proceedings to which the resolution applies.

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