

Minutes of the Harworth and Bircotes Town Council extra meeting held on Monday 3rd February 2025 at **7.15pm** at the Town Hall, Scrooby Road, Bircotes, DN11 8JP.

Present: Cllr Evans (Chair), Cllr Jones, Cllr Smith, Cllr Flynn, Cllr James, Cllr S Harrison and Cllr A Harrison.

Others: Mrs Davies (Officer)

17701 To receive and consider any apologies and reasons for absence

Cllr S Harrison proposed to approve apologies and reasons given for absence for Cllr Wratten, Cllr Sidwell and Cllr Schuller; this was seconded by Cllr A Harrison and resolved by the Council.

17702 To receive Declaration of Interest on any item on the agenda

No declaration of interests received.

17703 To suspend the meeting to hold a public session

No members of the public present.

17704 To consider the draft budget for 2025-26

Over the last few meetings, the Officer and Councillors have viewed the current budgets presented at the time and made suggestions ready for the draft 2025-26 budget; plus, the Officer has explained any adjustments made or variances.

Copies of the draft budget have been previously circulated for the Councillors to consider at the meeting. The Officer went through the proposed budget items and the expenditure required; the self-generated income amounts and then the contribution from the general reserves to balance the budget. The Officer reported that the current electric and gas contracts for the Town Hall and Information Centre expires this year; options and comparison with other fuel suppliers were carried on our behalf by Unity Aid; the electric and gas bills could be reduced by £2k for the Information Centre. The Council was happy to take this forward and to include the Town Hall.

The estimated proposed expenditure requirement for 2025-26 is £415,731.00; this has taken into to consideration inflation, pay increases which include the new national insurance contributions and the impact that has, plus the difficulty of predicting accurately future income.

The Office then went through the finances and reserves from the estimated balance as of 31.3.2025 and looked at the proposed impact for the 2025-26 expenditure and known income: plus, without an increase to the precept, the cash book reduction as of 31.3.2026. The contingency fund held should be between 6 – 12 months of the precept.

After consideration Cllr James proposed to approve the £415,731.00 expenditure required for 2025-26; this was seconded by Cllr Flynn and resolved by the Council.

After consideration Cllr Jones proposed to move to Unity Aid as our energy comparison contractor for the Information Centre and the Town Hall; this was seconded by Cllr S Harrison and resolved by the Council.

17705 To consider additional ear marked reserves for 2025-26

Following on from the budget considerations, the Officer went through the current ear marked reserves as of 31.12.2024; the Officer commented on the ear marked projects and their status; these totalled Town Council projects/funding £106,228 and partnership project grants of £132,203 totalling £238,431.

In October 2024, suggestions were discussed to add a Biodiversity work start fund of £500 and a development fund for 2025-26 community hub project of £5,000. The existing annual fund top up for £2,000 towards the next van and £1,000 towards the new cemetery phase 2 development will continue in 2025-26.

The Officer suggested to put an EMR fund aside of £9,000 for the completion of the Neighbourhood Plan Review in 2025; no further funding is available to use for this; plus, an EMR of £10,000 for funds for annual surveying and work to be carried out on the Town Council's trees.

The costing for CCTV in the cemeteries is currently being discussed; any costs will be used from the existing EMR for the cemeteries.

Cllr Jones proposed to approve the existing and additional EMRs as above; this was seconded by Cllr Flynn and resolved by the Council.

17706 To consider the draft precept for 2025-26

The Officer circulated copies of the precept calculations from a zero increase up to 10% increase; and then explained the various options for consideration. The **Band D tax rate** has increased by £154.98 from last year; this gives a figure of £2,655.45 which is then divided into the approved precept figure and shows the impact on the residents.

After further discussions and considerations this resulted in one vote for 7% increase, five votes for 8% increase and two votes for 9%.

Therefore, the majority vote is 8% - Cllr Flynn proposed to approve the 8% precept increase; this was seconded by Cllr Jones and resolved by the Council.

The 8% precept increase will come to £326,609 and will contribute to a total of £415,731 for gross expenditure; the budget will be balanced by self-generated income of £58,135 and £9,520 from general reserves, plus district council grants for services provide of £21,467.

The annual impact on taxpayers for a band D property will be £123.00 which is an annual increase of £2.06 (0.03961p per week or £0.1726p per month) from the previous year.

Note that properties lower than a band D will be paying less than the above calculations. Band D property calculation is 9th/9th, Band C is 8th/9th, Band B is 7th/9th and Band A is 6th/9th.