

APPLEBY-IN-WESTMORLAND TOWN COUNCIL

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Finance Committee Minutes

For the meeting held in the Moot Hall

Monday 11th December 2023 at 7.22pm

Present:

Cllr Heap (Chairman)
Cllr Anderton
Cllr Curley

Cllr Pape
Cllr Davidson

Also in attendance:

Cllr Mycock
Cllr Railton
Cllr Turnbull
Town Clerk and Clerk's Assistant

F1/12/23 Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Cllr Chalmers and Cllr Potts.

F2/12/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to report.

F3/12/23 Actions from the Previous Minutes

There were no actions from the previous minutes.

F4/12/23 Chairman's Report

There was no Chairman's report in respect of this meeting. Cllr Chalmers had sent an email prior to the meeting confirming that he had met with the Clerk to discuss the budget figures for 2024-2025 and approves of the draft budget being presented.

F5/12/23 Management Accounts

The Chair presented the Management Accounts for November 2023. The Clerk reported that the approved salary awards had been implemented in November, backdated to April 2023 for all employees.

As previously reported to Committee, the electricity and gas invoices have been delayed for several months, due to the changeover in contracts from Cumbria County Council to Westmorland & Furness Council, but they are now up to date.

The building repairs costs this month includes the work started in the Public Hall installing an accessible toilet. Cllr Anderton asked about the constant beeping fire alarm in the Public Hall, and it was confirmed this is in hand.

£2,000 was paid to ACT from the Contingency budget towards the cost of this year's Christmas Lights.

The Management Accounts for November 2023 were accepted and **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council.

F6/12/23 Internal Audit Report

The Internal Audit report had been circulated prior to the meeting and was accepted by the Committee. Cllr Anderton commented it was a very positive report, thanking the Clerk and her Assistant for their work. Cllr Heap confirmed that the finance records are very well maintained and the systems in place make it very easy to follow and understand the accounts.

F7/12/23 Budget for 2024-2025

The Clerk explained for the benefit of new Councillors, that although December seems early to be looking at budgets for next financial year, the final budget has to be agreed in January, as the precept request needs to be submitted to Westmorland & Furness by the end of January. The assumptions for next year's budget have been made based as accurately and scientifically as possible and include:

- Salaries have been calculated on the assumption that next year's pay awards will be at the same level as this year.
- Heating and lighting costs have been calculated based on usage/costs to date for this financial year, with the remaining months to March based on 2022-23 usage, charged at the current rates. However, we are waiting to hear back from W&F with any known pricing changes that might be implemented for next year, so these may change.
- Any other budget line figures have been based on this year's costs, plus inflation or any additional costs that we already know about.

Cllr Anderton asked about the recycling income and whether the money received from W&F will ever increase. The Clerk was not aware of any plans to increase the payment and explained that the money received covers staff costs to look after the recycling centre. When the recycling centre is moved to the Heritage Centre, there may need to be a discussion on whether the Council should continue to maintain the area.

Cllr Turnbull commented that the TIC exhibition room wasn't always full and sometimes struggled to fill its space and suggested that it could be leased out as a pop-up shop, which would generate a better income. Cllr Turnbull also mentioned that there were currently tourism grants available. The Clerk advised that the TIC Manager was aware of potential grants and had recently met with Cumbria Tourism to discuss plans. Cllr Curley supported Cllr Turnbull's suggestion and recommended looking at potential alternative income streams for the TIC as a future agenda item.

Cllr Curley also commented that Dowpitts Wood was becoming a money pit and a bit of a dead asset, with lots of money being spent on it, and receiving nothing back in return. The Clerk confirmed that the costs incurred this year included a full survey of the woods and carrying out ash dieback work and the budget next year includes carrying out some further ash dieback work. Cllr Railton suggested speaking to the Woodland Trust as it is a natural habitat for red squirrels and could be marketed as a tourist attraction.

The final budget will be presented at January's meeting for approval.

F6/12/23 Councillors' reports and items for future agendas

- Plans for the future of Dowpitts Wood (Property Committee).
- Ideas to diversify the use of the TIC Exhibition Room to increase income.

F7/12/23 Next Meeting

To note that the next meeting of the Finance Committee will be on **Monday 15th January 2024** at **7.15pm**, or at the rising of the Planning & General Purposes Committee in the Moot Hall.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.53pm.

At the Council Meeting held on **Wednesday 20th December 2023**, the Chairman of this meeting was authorised by the Committee to sign these minutes, to confirm they are a true and accurate record:

Cllr Heap
