



**MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SERVICES MEETING**  
**HELD ON THE 13<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2022**  
**AT 7.45 pm VIA VIRTUAL ACCESS**

Present:

Cllr A Snape (Chairman)  
Cllr P Earles  
Cllr I Blazeby  
Cllr K Badham  
Cllr J Gleave  
Cllr A Lutley – Joined at 8.00 pm

Rob McGregor – Town Clerk & Chief Executive (TC)  
Stephanie Stanley – Corporate Services Manager (CSM)  
Helen Glover - Senior Finance Officer (SFO)  
Tracy Lester – Catering & Facilities Lead (CFL)  
Lisa Cousins – Administration and Bookings Officer (ABO)

Members of the public – 0

**1348. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received and accepted for Councillor Mackey (CBC commitments).

Members considered if a new member was required on the Committee due to the recent resignation of Councillor Williams. Members agreed that as it was not long until the new Committees were agreed in May, they would keep the position vacant.

**1349. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive Statutory Declarations of Interests from Members in relation to:

- (a) Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – none.
- (b) Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – none.

**1350. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

**1351. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

**1352. INVITED SPEAKER**

There was no invited speaker.

**1353. MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

Councillor Blazeby asked why the delivery plan was not on the agenda. The Town Clerk advised this was an error and would be corrected for the next meeting. The CSM advised that there was a paper for Councillors to consider which related to the delivery plan at Council the following week.

*Action: CSM*

Councillor Badham requested his question be moved to exempt as it was relating to a member of the Committee. This was agreed.

**1354. MINUTES**

- a. For Members to receive and adopt the Minutes of the Business Services Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021.
- b. The minutes of the Business Services Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021 were adopted.

**1355. MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

**1356. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

**a. Proposed Budget 2022-23**

Members were asked to consider the proposed budget for 2022-23 circulated. These papers include alterations from Committee discussions.

Following the Clerks and Chairs meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January, the group made two recommendations for the Committee to consider when discussing the proposed budget papers for 2022-23:

- 1. For Planning Professional Fees to be set at £5,000 (not £1,000 as originally presented)
- 2. To recommend a Precept increase of 3.67% to cover external costs imposed (relating to National Insurance Social Care Levy, pension contributions and pay increases)

Members agreed it was important for any increases to be justified. The external pressures which could not be avoided were the Government increase in National Insurance contributions (social care levy), a 1% increase in employers pension contributions and the increase in pay scale rates to be agreed at National level. These would require a precept increase of £31,321. The Chairman advised that the Chairman's group had felt there was a clear and transparent justification for a precept increase of 3.67% to cover the additional costs. The Chairman explained that he personally felt the Council was in a difficult position needing to balance the collective responsibility to ensure financial stability against the current economic issues resulting in the highest inflation in 30 years and a significant impact on residents standard of living.

The Accountant's forecast suggested a reduction to the General Reserve for the year of approximately £38,000. This was a good result considering that we had allocated £50,000 from the General Reserve towards the cost of acquiring 3 Station Road. The Chairman felt

the Reserves were healthy, with the Council carrying approximately 9 months running costs – sensible considering the Council's exposure to the hospitality sector.

Councillor Blazeby raised questions on certain items showing on the budget and these would be looked into further. They related to the reduction for the Corporate budget (Regalia £1000) and the community awards not being progressed as per the recent discussion at community.

It was **recommended** to proceed with Option 4, setting the Precept at £885,564 with an increase of 3.67%.

**b. Café Furniture**

Members agreed it was necessary to purchase additional café furniture, to avoid customers being turned away at busy times. Members suggested that Officers should review the current table reservation system, to avoid reserved tables being vacant at busy times. Members were keen for any new furniture purchased to fit in with the current look, comfort and quality of the existing furniture, which had performed well and offered comfort for customers.

It was **recommended** to get samples of the alternative tables and chairs to review them in person as per the previous purchases for café furniture.

*Action: CFL*

**c. Accessible Toilet**

Members were asked to consider the plans and costs circulated for works to convert the Denel Wing Ground Floor male toilets into a compliant accessible toilet facility. The report circulated included details on the procurement process followed.

Members agreed that the suggested new location of the accessible toilet, with ample space allowing for left-hand and right-hand transfer, was a good solution. Members also agreed that the opportunity should be taken to modernise this with up-to-date touch free options.

It was **recommended** to proceed with Option 1, Quote A at £8750.00 to provide a high spec facility with touch free flush and taps.

**d. Wi-Fi Proposal**

Members were asked to consider extending the Wi-Fi in the Denel Wing to offer this for prospective business owners wishing to rent flexible office space.

Members agreed this should be done, in order to extend the offering for office space hire by the day or half day.

The Town Clerk had obtained an indicative cost from the Town Council's IT provider, which would be £299.40 including VAT, plus cabling and installation costs.

It was **recommended** that officers obtain the full costs for wi-fi installation in the vacant office, including cabling and installation, for a proposal to be considered at the next Business Services Meeting.

*Action: TC*

**1357. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**a. Marketing & Communications Plan 2022-23**

Councillor Blazeby noted the Approved Contractor List status had not been updated, and asked for this to be updated. Councillor Blazeby noted there was a link on the Rufus Centre website to the Flitwick Business Club, which was not currently active. The copy also needed to be updated.

*Action: CMM*

**b. Marketing & Communications Forward Plan**

This was noted.

**1358. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

**1359. EXEMPT ITEMS**

The following resolution will be **moved** that is advisable in the public interest that the public and press are excluded whilst the following exempt item issue is discussed.

12a) Officers Update – for information

12b) Financial Reports – for information

12c) Credit Control Summary – for information and consideration

12d) Occupancy Stats and Forecasts – for information

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Council **resolve** to exclude the public and press by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.