



Credition Town Council



Minutes of the of the Finance Committee held on 4 January 2011

Present:	Councillors	Mr F Letch (Chairman) Mr W Brown (substituting for D Nation) Miss J Harris Mrs A Hughes Mr R Adams Mrs L Brookes-Hocking
Absent:		Mr J Downes Mr B Wright
In Attendance:	Councillor	Mr T Connell
	Town Clerk	Mr M Maggs
	Press/Public	1

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Nation (personal commitment) who, in accordance with Standing Order 29, appointed Councillor Brown as his substitute for the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

Prejudicial	Councillor Brown	Minute 7.3 Credition Community Transport (not actioned as the item was not discussed in any detail)
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3. Public Question Time

None.

4. Chairman's and Clerk's Announcements

None.

5. Finance Committee Minutes

The Minutes of the Finance Committee held on 14 January 2010 were received and approved as a correct record.

6. Clerk's Report on Summary of Accounts and Recommendations on Expenditure

Detailed information was contained in the Clerk's report and supporting documentation which had been circulated to all councillors with paper copies tabled at the meeting.

The Clerk provided a brief explanation for his recommendations, emphasising the need for prudence and caution in what could be a very difficult and testing year for local government. It would be important to retain as much budgetary flexibility as possible due to the uncertain position of the principal authorities and their ability to maintain local services. He had tried to incorporate the aspirations expressed in the town plan and relevant working groups by presenting a balanced, responsible and adaptable budget.

7. Expenditure for 2011/2012

7.1. Administration

The following allocations were recommended for approval:

Staff - Salaries - NI - Pensions	63000
Imprest	50
Telephone & Internet	550
Postage	200
Office Supplies	1500

Office Equipment	1500
Training	1000
Audit	900
Insurance	5150
Newsletter/Annual Report	800
Website	500
<u>Administration Total</u>	<u>75150</u>

Staff - Salaries - NI - Pensions

The Clerk's recommendations were accepted in principle. A decision on increasing the hours for the Administration Assistant would be made following the recommendations of the Administration and Personnel Sub Committee.

Imprest

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Most payments were now covered by standing account, invoice or cheque.

Telephone & Internet

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Use of ICT continued to provide cost savings. ISP costs had been absorbed into MDDC IT maintenance contract. Release of broadband line currently used for CCTV and reuse by TC admin would incur some additional costs but use of this line would significantly improve efficiency.

Postage

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Despite increased use of electronic communications, council business was still heavily reliant on paper. However, electronic delivery of agenda papers to press and public continued to make savings and further significant savings had been made through increased use of electronic delivery to councillors.

Royal Mail planned to increase postage prices in 2011. On the assumption that further efficiencies could be made, a reduction in the allocation was recommended.

Office Supplies

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Additional work would increase costs this year (elections, new councillors, increased consultation on new legislation etc). Also increases in printing and photocopying charges. Cost reductions could be made with increased use of new technology – reducing printing and photocopying costs. Slightly higher printing costs due to lease of new laser printer – offset by saving in staff time.

Office Equipment

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Contract with MDDC IT Services (hardware, systems and software support) working well and continuing to assist with overall admin efficiency. Partnership with MDDC and sharing of local facilities also continuing well, though aging equipment (photocopier, franking machine) may need replacement next year. It would be difficult for MDDC to justify further investment due to diminishing presence and decreased need. Need to consider impact of potential MDDC budget changes - especially on local office.

Need to replace remaining mono laser printer (now nearly 10 years old). Need to provide contingency for existing printer and provide facilities for additional staff/volunteers/working group members (small allocation made in previous year but not spent).

Commitment to earmark funds for future equipment replacement (minimum £300 per year).

Training

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

The County Training Partnership had been organising more courses and was likely to continue next year following implementation of new legislation etc. Also, dependent the outcome of election with training for new councillors. Commitment to support CPD (continuing professional development) and completion of professional qualifying criteria would add to costs.

Audit

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Traditionally under-allocated. Increased audit fee in 2010.

Insurance

The Clerk’s suggestions were recommended for approval.
A review started in August and was continuing (currently negotiating and waiting for quotations). Possibility of considerable reduction if the Council would commit to long-term contract. Indications were favourable. The Fidelity Guarantee change resulted in considerable increase in 2010.

Councillor Adams requested that his vote against be recorded.

Newsletter/Annual Report

The Clerk’s suggestions were recommended for approval.
Continuing need to produce 4 newsletters per year. Increased number of copies and greater dependency on publisher had increased costs.

Website

The Clerk’s suggestions were recommended for approval.
New website waiting for revised articles. Contract with website company continuing. Hosting to move to new company with increased and more flexible support. MDDC to remain host for domain name and email system.

7.2. Democracy & Councillors

The following allocations were recommended for approval:

Hospitality	1200
Basic Allowance/Mayor’s Expenses	400
Council & Councillors Expenses	1000
Elections	0
Advertising	400
Subscriptions	1400
<u>Democracy & Councillors Total</u>	<u>4400</u>

Hospitality

The Clerk’s suggestions were recommended for approval.
More regular events required a commitment to entertain (twinning, competitions, public events etc).

Councillor Basic Allowance and Mayor’s Expenses

The Clerk’s suggestions were recommended for approval.

Council & Councillor Expenses

The Clerk’s suggestions were recommended for approval.

Elections

The Clerk’s suggestions were recommended for approval.
Earmarked funding sufficient as costs would be shared across district.
The allocation would need to be reinstated in future years.

Advertising

The Clerk’s suggestions were recommended for approval.
Requirement for this to be under own and separate heading. Need to promote existing and proposed council activities (floral Crediton competition etc). Increased use of public notices etc). Consistently low allocation.

Subscriptions

The Clerk’s suggestions were recommended for approval.

DALC	800
NALC (LCR)	15
DPFA	35
Fields in Trust	35
SLCC	380
Spatial Technology (OS mapping)	100
Information Commissioner	35
<u>Subscriptions Sub Total</u>	<u>1400</u>

7.3. Donations

The Clerk's overall recommendation to increase the total allocation from 6555 to 8500, with increases from £1000 to £1250 each for the ad hoc and youth allocations, was recommended for approval.

Consideration was given to increasing donations in line with changes in the precept and increased inflation. Ad hoc and Youth allocations had remained at £1000 each for many years. Previous year's allocation was incorrectly set.

No discussion took place on individual allocations. The Clerk was in the process of reviewing the Council's policy on grants and donations which would assist the Council rationalise the management of the donation budget. The Council would need to consider the allocation of annual donations and recently received requests for support at an appropriate full Council meeting.

<i>Donations</i>	
Annual Donations	<u>6000</u>
<i>Annual Donations Sub Total</i>	<u>6000</u>
<i>Ad Hoc & Youth</i>	
Ad Hoc	1250
Youth	1250
<i>Ad Hoc & Youth Sub Total</i>	<u>2500</u>
<i>Donations Total</i>	<u>8500</u>

7.4. Property

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Peoples Park	4000
Scout Memorial Gardens	3000
Upper Deck	450
War Memorial	1600
Boniface Statue	0
Bandstand	800
Allotments	200
Stoney Park	0
Street Furniture	1000
Millennium Cross	0
Town Clock	350
Flagpole/Maypole	0
Mayor's Chain/Board/Notice Board	100
Small Works Budget	250
Office Rent	3500
Land Registration	600
CCTV	3000
<i>Property Total</i>	<u>18850</u>

Regular, monthly, inspections should restart in the New Year which will result in urgent issues being dealt with immediately. Need for full property inspection and risk assessment at least on an annual basis.

Peoples Park

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Thorough review of outstanding works and future improvements should be carried out by the reconstituted Peoples Park & Scout Memorial Gardens Working Group. Need to ensure sufficient allocation to see through all works recommended by the WG.

Trees

Requirement for regular inspection – yearly to 3 yearly. Recommend approval of previously commissioned replanting programme along top path, re-inspection of mature and immature trees. Previous estimates accepted.

Grounds Maintenance

Increased grass cutting due to continuing milder autumn/spring weather. Need for regular funding for top path. Current estimates accepted.

Scout Memorial Gardens

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Some major funding dependent on completion this year (2011).

Current available/promised funding:

TC = £10500

S106 = £15000

DCC = £4000

Possibility of further £1 to £5k from other funding sources – dependent on detailed plan

Upper Deck

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Current estimates accepted.

War Memorial

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Pigeon deterrents installed and largely effective. However, evidence of detritus and damage.

Regular cleaning of surrounding area required. Requirement to carry out electrical safety checks on equipment.

Commitment to repair – stonework, shingle roof and wood work beginning to show signs of deterioration.

Earmarked reserves insufficient.

Current estimates accepted.

Boniface Statue

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Repairs to vandalised stonework outstanding. Regular cleaning of steps required to reduce slip hazard in wet weather. Regular removal of graffiti. Full cleaning to be carried out.

Sufficient in earmarked funding to cover costs.

Current estimates accepted.

Bandstand

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Repairs due to vandalism and general maintenance needed. Graffiti still in evidence.

Requirement to carry out electrical safety checks on equipment.

Renewal of lease (legal fees negotiated down to £300). Earmarked reserves insufficient.

Current estimates accepted.

Allotments

It was recommended to increase rents in line with normal policy (1p per sq m). Allotments Association working well but will need continued support.

Current estimates accepted.

Stoney Park

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Rent review and valuation outstanding – costs to be taken from accumulated rent.

Seats/Street Furniture

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

A regular allocation should be made for the maintenance of existing seats and installation of bins (including salt/grit bins).

Bus Shelters

4 shelters. Require minimum of £300 per year cleaning (every other month).

Need to repaint (masonry) War Memorial bus shelter on regular basis.

Cleaning of immediate area around Old Town Hall and Lloyds Bank shelters at £150.

Additional cleaning at £300 – twice yearly interior and exterior surfaces, refuse bin and railings.

Sufficient reserves to carry out most works with smaller allocation for additional seats/bin.

Millennium Cross

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Town Clock

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Cost of annual servicing increased. Repairs carried out this year using previous underspend/reserves. Consideration should be given to reviewing existing contract.

Flagpole/Maypole

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Mayor's Chain/Board/Notice Board

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Most works completed.

Small Works Budget

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

As in previous years - majority of works can be carried out under particular budgets but some flexibility would be advantageous.

Office Rent

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval. Rent currently set at £2600. Review outstanding. Need to include legal fees.

Land Registry

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Registration progressing. Peoples Park, War Memorial, Bandstand outstanding.

CCTV

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

MDDC now managing system at cost to TC of £2500 per year. Modifications being carried out. Contingency needed for additional works/repairs etc.

7.5. Amenities

Projected figures produced by the Clerk were adjusted and the following allocations were recommended for approval:

Town Centre Economic Development	3000
Floral Crediton	5000
Town Flag & Banners	80
P3 Scheme	0
Town Square	0
Boniface Trademark	0
Jubilee 2012	1000
Christmas Tree & Lights/CAMM	1100
<u>Amenities Total</u>	<u>10180</u>

Town Centre Economic Development

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Floral Crediton

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Town Flag and Banners

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Provision of Armed Forces Day flag.

P3 Scheme

The Clerk's suggestions were recommended for approval.

Sub committee had not met and made no recommendations.

Town Square

The Clerk's suggestion was not supported and no allocation made. Further consideration would be given to resolving the maintenance problem in discussions with MDDC.

Boniface Trademark

The Clerk's suggestion was recommended for approval.

Jubilee 2012 & Events

The Clerk's suggestion of £500 was increased to £1000. Recently set up Events Working Group would require support.

Christmas Tree/Lights/CAMM

The Clerk's suggestion was recommended for approval.

Need to rationalise support (Chamber/CAMM/Contractor). Recommend provision to Chamber of Commerce to organise/manage on production of accounts

7.6. Honorarium & Sundries

The Clerk's suggestion was recommended for approval.

Honorarium	100
<u>Honorarium & Sundries Total</u>	<u>100</u>

7.7. Banking Arrangements, Shares & Reserves

The Financial Risk Assessment carried out by Internal Auditor again indicated low risk. Earmarked funding set aside for projects (mostly property) had been largely unspent. However, most of the previously allocated monies would be spent as a result of this committee's recommendations to carry out works.

There is an essential need to maintain sufficient reserves to provide a contingency and, increasingly, match funding for future projects especially if support from principal authorities is restricted and access to lottery funding is removed. The strategic reserve is a statutory requirement for use in unplanned emergencies only.

Refer to Assets and Reserves Statement on Clerk's Summary.

8. Budget and Precept for 2011/2012

It was agreed to recommend a budget of £117180 and to claim a precept of £117100; the difference to be taken from reserves. Setting a precept of £117,100 would provide a small increase in the precept (£2100) at no cost to the local tax payer (Town Council element). This is achieved by taking advantage of the additional revenue generated by increased development.

The Clerk received a formal vote of thanks for his comprehensive report and work.

Signed:

(F Letch – Chairman)

Date:

The meeting closed at 8.50pm