

**Present:** Councillor Anderson (Chairman) and Councillors Blackburn, Brownson, Golightly, Wilson and S. Zair

**Also Present:** David Anderson (Town Clerk).

**FIN.56/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies were received.

**FIN.57/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were submitted.

**FIN.58/13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

**REPORT OF TOWN CLERK**

**FIN.59/13 ACCOUNT BALANCES AS AT 14<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

The Town Clerk reported account balances as follows:-

|                        |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| PSDF                   | £41,081.27 |
| Deposit Account        | £13,318.46 |
| Current Account        | £5,954.05  |
| Allotments Account     | £307.63    |
| Mayors Charity Account | £850.03    |

**RECOMMENDED:** That the information be noted.

**FIN.60/13 INVESTMENTS**

Consideration was given to the schedule of investments as at 14<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the information be noted.

**FIN.61/13 SPEND AGAINST BUDGET AS AT 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2013 (Quarter 3)**

The spend against budget as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013 was considered and noted.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the account balances and projected outcome be noted.

**FIN.62/13 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

Consideration was given to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2014/15 - 2017/18, in particular Members considered the proposed budget for 2014/15 and consequent Council Tax.

Member were reminded that in addition to inflationary pressures the Council's funding was also vulnerable to the effects of the Localisation of Council Tax Support, which had resulted in a reduction to the Council's Tax Base consequently reducing the ability to raise revenue. The Government had made a grant available, however this did not make up the shortfall and the allocation by Durham County Council would reduce each year. The forecast allocations of grant was reflected in the MTFP.

In addition the Secretary of State's powers to impose a referendum on principal councils if a proposed increase was above 2% or £5.00 (whichever was higher) may be extended to local councils which would limit the Councils ability to deliver additional services. An announcement on this had not yet been made.

**Signed:** .....  
**Chair**

The double taxation grant regime had been withdrawn by Durham County Council, which meant that if the Town Council was to take over services or supplement services delivered by DCC there would be no additional grant to help fund it.

After careful consideration Members proposed the following amendments to the MTFP:-

- The allocation to Citizens Advice Bureaux be suspended as it was understood that following the reorganisation of CAB the donation was no longer necessary.
- The contract with Groundwork Trust to provide the Parks and Environment Team not be renewed for 2014/15 as it was considered that the Town Council no longer received value for money.
- That an allocation of £3,000 be made to cover the cost of production of a quarterly newsletter as it was important to advise the public of the activities of the Town Council. The publication of a quarterly newsletter was also a criterion for Quality Status, which emphasised its importance.
- An allocation of £5,000 was proposed to assist the staging of Velo 29, a town centre cycle race which would bring economic benefit to the town. Financial assistance of this event had previously been agreed in principle by the Council (Minute No FIN.36/13 and TC.81/13 refer)
- It was noted that an allocation of £5,000 had been included to help fund a Parish Plan. This would assist the Council in understanding the public's views on local services they would like the Town Council to deliver or improve.
- The allocation of £5,000 from reserves be deleted.

The resulting Council Tax would be £36.35 (Band D) which represented an increase of £7.75 or 27.12%.

**RECOMMENDED:** That consideration be given to the MTFP and budget proposals for 2014/15.

**FIN.63/13 AUTHORISATION OF CHEQUES – DELEGATED POWERS**

In accordance with Delegated Powers, the Mayor and Chair of Finance had authorised payment of cheques detailed in the report.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the action taken be confirmed.

**FIN.64/13 CHEQUES PRESENTED FOR AUTHORISATION**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk detailing cheques presented for authorisation.

**RECOMMENDED:** That payments detailed in the report be authorised.

**FIN.65/13 APPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY GRANTS AND DONATIONS**

Consideration was given to an application for a Community Grant from Bishop Auckland Theatre Society.

**RECOMMENDED:** That a donation of £200 be made to Bishop Auckland Theatre Society (S145, Local Government Act 1972)

Signed: .....  
Chair

**FIN.66/13 CDALC - FUNDING FOR SECRETARIAT**

Members noted that Durham County Council were to withdraw funding for County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) with effect from April 2016. The Association had established a working group to examine all options available for future funding. Further information would be reported in due course.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the information be noted.

Signed: .....  
Chair