

Minutes of a **MEETING** of **BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Wear Valley Christian Centre, Bishop Auckland on **TUESDAY 15TH JANUARY 2012** at 6.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor Kay (**in the Chair**) and Councillors Anderson, Fleming, Golightly, Laurie, Lee, Lethbridge, and Wilson.

Also Present: David Anderson (Town Clerk), Dani Webb (Northern Echo)

TC 135/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Huntington, Lesley Zair and Sam Zair.

TC 136/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted.

TC 137/12 BUDGET FOR 2013/14

In accordance with Minute No TC 123/12 members considered the implications of the Localisation of Council Tax Support (LCTS) on the Council's initial budget plans and finalised the precept and Council Tax for 2013/14.

The Council initially set its budget for 2013/14 at its meeting held on 27th November (Minute no TC 119/12 refers) based on the information known at that time and agreed a budget of £143,700. After taking into account the use of balances Council Tax was calculated at £25.71 (Band D).

Information was received from Durham County Council on 13th December 2012 indicating that the Council Tax Base would be significantly lower than previous years as a result of the Localisation of Council Tax Support. Initially the Government had indicated that local councils would not be adversely affected by reductions in the Council Tax Base. However it had been subsequently confirmed that actual council tax base would also apply to local councils.

The council tax base for Bishop Auckland had reduced from 5,100.2 to 3,884.6 - a reduction of 1,215.6 (24%).

If Council Tax for 2013/14 remained at £25.71 as initially agreed there would be a shortfall of £11,205 on the budget. To achieve the Council's initial spending plans Council Tax would need to increase to £28.59 (Band D), which equated to an increase of £5.10 (21.73%).

Members noted that a LCTSS grant of £23,969 was being passed to the Town Council by Durham County Council for 2013/14. The grant was paid by the Government direct to principal councils and it was within their discretion whether to pass on an element relating to local councils. For 2013/14 the County Council had agreed to pass on this element in full. There was however no indication whether this would continue in future years.

Members also noted that the County Council would be withdrawing double taxation grants from 2013/14. The Town Council received a grant in respect of

Signed:
Town Mayor

the provision of allotment sites. Although this was a relatively small amount, £447, it was an indication that funding may not be available in future if the Town Council were to take on or enhance services currently provided by the County Council.

It was explained that the Secretary of State had powers under the Localism Act to enforce a referendum if council tax increases were above a limit set by him. Notification had been received that this would not apply to local councils for 2013/14, although the Secretary of State could apply it in future years.

Members therefore needed to be mindful of the uncertainty of the LCTSS grant in future years, the withdrawal of double taxation grant and the potential that local councils could be included in the referendum regulations in future.

Detailed consideration was given to budgetary requirements for 2013/14.

Councillor Anderson moved that the budget requirement as agreed on 27th November 2012, as detailed in the report be approved. This was seconded by Councillor Mrs Laurie.

Councillor Kay moved an amendment to reduce the budget by reducing expenditure on Members Allowances, Civic & Approved Duties, the Food Festival, Bishop Auckland in Bloom. The amendment was not seconded.

RESOLVED: The budget agreed by Town Council on 27th November 2012, as detailed in the report be approved and a precept of £111,078 be declared for 2013/14, which would result in a Council Tax of £28.59 (Band D)

N.B. In accordance with Standing Order 14, Councillors Kay and Lee requested that their names be recorded as having voted against the motion.