

**Minutes of the Finance, Building and & Assets Committee
held in The Council Chambers, New Mills Town Hall, New Mills
Monday 16 December 2024 at 7.00pm**

Councillors Present John Reed (Chair), Steve Davey, Margaret Ritchie, Lyn Bannister, Katy Pearson and Beth Eadie.

In Attendance Clare Wild (Clerk. Two members of the public, representatives from New Mills & District Volunteer Centre (NMDVC).

FIN/24/36 Introductions and Apologies for Absence

Absent Cllrs: Andrew Denton, Matthew Donovan, Simon Evans and had presented apologies.

FIN/24/37 Variation Of Business

None

FIN/24/38 Declaration of Members Interests

No declarations were made.

FIN/24/39 Public Participation

Paul Frost, member of the Board for NMDVC, addressed the council and provided a brief history regarding the matter being discussed at the meeting. The council had been informed that New Mills Town Council (NMTC) had secured a loan on behalf of the Volunteer Centre, as they had been unable to secure the capital required for the purchase of 33-35 Union Road. A 25 year lease had been entered into and it had been New Mills Town Councils intention to transfer the freehold or enter into a further long term lease to ensure that the NMDVC had premises. Annually NMDVC made payment to NMTC that was equal to the loan repayment to the Public Works Loan Board and all building improvements had been co-ordinated and funded by NMDVC since acquiring the premises.

FIN/24/40 Minutes of the previous meeting

Council noted that the minutes of the last meeting had not been presented due to resource issues which had been addressed by agreeing to recruit a minute taker.

FIN/24/41 New Mills & District Volunteer Centre – Lease on 33-35 Union Road

Council discussed the options available for NMDVC and when the representatives had been asked the importance of holding the freehold

they advised that it would allow changes to the building without seeking consent from the leaseholder, NMDVC could secure a loan against holding the asset and it could allow them to sell the property, to either raise capital or to sell and move to alternative premises.

Committee discussed the matter at length and noted that the committee had previously recommended that the Council proceed to offer NMDVC a further long term lease, retaining the property as an asset, and option that the Clerk continued to recommend. Cllrs discussed that matter and the committee agreed that the matter should be placed under a public consultation to ensure transparency.

RESOLVED: Committee recommendation to Council. A public consultation on the options available for consideration when the lease terminated in 2027 should be conducted.

7.40 pm 2 members of the public left the meeting.

Budget Monitoring

FIN/24/42

2024-2025 Forecast

Members had been provided with an updated forecast for 2024-2025 that has shown a surplus end of year balance. The RFO advised that further updating would be required before the final position would be shared with the Council at the January 2025 meeting to be considered and confirmed.

Chair commented that he hoped that the council would be in a strong position at the end of the financial year to boost the Council's general reserve, which currently stood significantly less than what would be considered good practice.

FIN/24/43

2025-2026 Budget Setting

Members had been presented with figures for 2025-2026 Income and expenditure. Parks projects and limited capital work had been included collectively this cumulated to a 26% increase on the Band D annual charge. The Chair advised that a 15% increase, monetary value of approx. £43,000 would cover basic raise in operational costs with a 2.5% inflation increase and the increase in staff costs including the 15% employee national insurance contributions. The Committee discussed that they anticipated the increase to be between 10%-20% from information that they have been provided with.

FIN/24/44

Capital Works and Project Costs

Clerk had circulated a list of potential projects and estimated costs for known capital works. The information also contained budgets for key fixed operation costs also. The Committee requested that all projects are included in a draft budget and an essential cost budget is drawn as a comparable. The Council could look to review this and decide the priority order for projects/capital work, consider the level of increase in budget

that this would require and how this would effect the precept request.

FIN/24/45 Income Generation Working Party (IGWP)

The Committee discussed and noted several areas that current income streams could be increased that required a review (Room Bookings & Events on New Mills Town Council Land FIN 24/31), plus various new possibilities that had also been mentioned. It had been agreed that due to the amount of work to complete this exercise it would be preferable for a working party to be appointed by the Council.

Clerk advised the Committee that the invoices for the annual charges for parking spaces owned by NMTC for 2025-2026 had been issued in an administrative error before the 10% increase could be applied.

Committee welcomed the IGWP recommendations on these charges to affect changes for 2026-2027.

ACTION: Cllrs agreed to develop terms of reference for a Working Party to focus on Income Generation for New Mills Town Council to be considered for approval.

FIN/24/46 Internal Audit Report

Clerk advised that an update had not been available to present to the Committee but one would be circulated post meeting. A further update would be provided to the Committee at the meeting on the 24 March 2025.

ACTION: Clerk to provide the Committee Members with an electronic copy of an updated Internal Audit Action Plan

FIN/24/47 Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED: The press and public had been excluded from the meeting of the following matters on the grounds that they could involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in The Local Government Act, Schedule 12A, Part 1.

FIN/24/48 Budget Monitoring – Associated Personnel Costs

Clerk asked the Council to consider this matter, as previous Members had approved a discretionary bonus at Christmas. Committee considered that it would be better practice for any salary to be appropriate to for Officers duties and responsibilities. Other payments should be linked to an increase in additional duties and responsibilities taken on.

Clerk requested that a healthy training budget be allocated for 2025-2026, long term upskilling Officers would cause a reduction in costs by decreasing outsourcing of services and increased efficiencies.

RESOLVED: New Mills Town Council closed the meeting as all the agenda items had been discussed.

The meeting closed at 8.57pm

Signed as a true and correct record of the meeting

Chair _____ Date _____

* Please ensure that each page is signed and dated**

DRAFT