



4th January 2022

Dear Councillor.

You are hereby summoned to attend **BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL'S FINANCE MEETING at 6:30 pm on WEDNESDAY 12th JANUARY 2022.**

The meeting will be held remotely in accordance with the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020

Any members of the public who also wish to attend on this basis please contact the Clerk so that arrangements may be made for them.

Members of the public have the right to ask questions at Council meetings and to speak in Welsh or English, provided that at least 3 working days' notice in writing of the question has been provided to the Clerk.

Agenda

1. To receive any questions from the public.
2. To receive and accept apologies.
3. **Declarations of Interest:** Members are invited to declare any interests they may have in any items on the Agenda.
4. **Council Meetings:** To confirm the minutes of the Council Finance Meeting held on the 10th of November 2021.
5. To receive, consider and make a determination regarding contract energy quotes for electricity supply.
6. To receive, consider and note the Interim Internal Audit Report **(April – September 2021)**
7. To receive and consider the **2022/23** Draft Budget.
8. **Responsible Finance Officer's Update:** To receive the November and December 2021 financial updates.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Warren". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and a long, sweeping underline.

Kevin Warren. MInstLM. FCMI.
Chief Officer



BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL FINANCE MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12th January 2022.

The meeting was held remotely in accordance with the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020.

In attendance:

Councillor: J. Huybs (In the Chair)

Councillors in attendance: N. Horler, L. Cowles, M. Harris, L. Evans, A. Jones, G. James, S. Bright.

Officers: Kevin Warren (Chief Officer) Kerry Jones (Assistant Chief Officer) Rebecca Smith (Healthy Blaenavon Officer)

Visitor: Mr Andy Smith – Community Finance Solutions (Appointed Internal Auditor for Blaenavon Town Council)

The Council Finance meeting was opened at 6:30pm by the Chairman Councillor Jackie Huybs who welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

A minute silence was observed in respect of the late Mr Danny Watkins s former Town Councillor.

1. To receive any questions from the public.

None received.

2. Apologies

- Cllr Harvey – Family Emergency.
- Cllr Skyrme – Absent.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr James that the apologies be accepted.

Resolved: Apologies accepted by members.

3. Declaration of interests

None declared.

4. To confirm the minutes of the Council Finance Meeting held on the 10^h of November 2021 as a true and accurate record.

The minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments being offered.

It was proposed by Cllr Harris and seconded by Cllr Cowles that the minutes be approved.

Resolved: Minutes accepted as a true record

5. To receive, consider and make a determination regarding contract energy quotes for electricity supply.

The Chief Officer explained to members that he has recently been working on securing value for money energy quotes from suppliers and has sent off letters of authority to Utility Aid and Green Energy Advice Bureau.

At present the quotes are still outstanding and an update will be provided to members at the next available Full Council meeting.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

6. To receive, consider and note the Interim Internal Audit Report (April – September 2021)

The Chairman outlined to members that they have all received a copy of the report and requested if there were any questions on it. There were no questions.

The Chairman asked Mr Smith if he wanted to make a comment on the report.

Mr Smith stated that he didn't wish to add anything to the report and commented that there were no issues. The Council's finances are moving along nicely and have been for several years but was happy to take any questions from members.

There were no questions from members.

It was proposed by Cllr Jones that the report be accepted, this was seconded by Cllr James.

All members were in agreement.

Resolved: Interim Audit Report accepted by members.

7. To receive and consider the 2022/23 Draft Budget.

The Chairman explained to members that the draft budget has been prepared by the Chief Officer and assessed by the Internal Auditor Mr Smith.

The Chairman also reminded members that the Chief Officer has also sent out to members a detailed draft budget report explaining the context of the proposed budget.

The Chairman confirmed that all members have read the budget documents and was there any questions from members?

There were no questions presented by members and at this point the Chairman asked Mr Smith if he had any comments. Mr Smith explained that it was not his role to recommend anything to members but to explain the facts presented.

Mr Smith stated that his role as requested by the Council was to perform an in-depth audit in terms of the budget setting process and confirmed that the draft budget was audited and from an accounting perspective the budget presented was a lean budget.

Mr Smith stated that he has examined the budget line by line together with the Chief Officer and every single line in the budget has got back up or supplementary information explaining why the cost has been listed.

There is no guesswork or figures plucked out of the air and in his opinion some of the figures listed could have been increased especially around pensions and redundancy for staff.

The Chairman thanked Mr Smith for his comments concerning the budget and recognised that the Chief Officer has put a huge amount of work into the budget and has gone above and beyond and it was extremely extensive.

The Chairman also stated that this was the first time that the Council have considered raising the precept during the last three years and during this period the Council has grown phenomenally.

Cllr Cowles reiterated what Mr Smith had alluded to in that having looked at some of the figures this was a lean budget, and these could have been increased. Also, the precept has remained static for the past three years and the Council is growing every year and delivering more services within the community in terms of projects.

Cllr Cowles referred to the earmarked reserves and having read the very detailed budget report, unless services are going to be cut, then the precept raise to £185k has to be made and he fully supported the proposed increase.

Cllr Jones echoed the comments made by Cllr Cowles and confirmed that he had read the report in detail and wanted to thank the Chief Officer and Mr Smith for the volume of work that had been completed.

Cllr Jones confirmed that he was not a fan of raising the precept, but it hadn't been raised during the past three years and in order to move forward he fully supported the precept increase.

Cllr Evans commented that he understood the situation but didn't think that the rise in the precept was sustainable in the current environment and didn't think that this should be passed on to a new council.

Cllr Evans referred to the cost of living increases in April 2022 and stated that members should look at a different option as there are no options presented other than to raise the precept to £185k and suggested that services be cut.

The Chairman pointed out to Cllr Evans that there are options presented. The options are to cut it and not to increase it and that the Chief Officer has laid out exactly what would happen if the Council did that.

The Chairman asked Cllr Evans to provide examples of what services could be cut.

Cllr Evans was unable to provide any examples and stated that he would have to go through it first and he might not want to discuss it in the meeting because the meeting was not closed.

The Chairman asked if any other member had anything to add?

Cllr Cowles requested if he could ask the Chief Officer a question linked to the comments made by Cllr Evans.

The Chief Officer was asked to clarify that the precept needed to be raised because if it remained at £130k that would result in a negative carry over and therefore an illegal budget?

The Chief Officer provided members with an explanation and rationale for the precept increase based on the services being delivered in what is a very different council from three years ago based on how it has grown.

The Chief Officer explained that the term negative budget has been raised and he offered to put some context surrounding that point.

The Chief Officer explained that the proposed budget is based on facts and has been increased to support costs and maintain services and this figure has been calculated at £185k.

An explanation was then provided around the carry over figure and the context regarding this in terms of funded reserves and precepted reserves. What this means is that the figure of £185k would provide a carry-over figure in March 2023 of £26,878 based on the forecasted budget spend which included earmarked reserves.

The Chief Officer stated that there are three areas that members needed to consider concerning the proposed budget. These are the questions that he has asked himself and discussed in detail with the internal auditor during the budget setting process.

These questions are.

- Is the budget reasonable?
- Is the budget proportionate?
- Is the budget necessary to deliver a comprehensive budget?

The Chief Officer assured members that the answer to all three questions was in the affirmative. The Chief Officer reminded members that he had sent out an Audit Wales power point presentation which provided guidelines on setting a comprehensive budget.

The Chief Officer offered members further context in respect of budget setting and in particular what a negative budget looks like. It was explained that the projected carryover of £26,878 would need to be maintained as an emergency reserve.

An example of this was that if the precept remained static at £130k, then based on the projected spend, this would create a negative budget of £28k which is illegal.

The Chief Officer continued to provide members with further examples of carry over figures between £130k - £185k.

It was also explained that the precept increase of £55k would obviously have a cost implication in terms of Council Tax and this was explained further to members with reference being made to the tables listed within the budget report.

The Chief Officer also explained what the cost increase would be for different council tax bands referring to Bands namely 'A' and 'B'

- Band 'A' - £19.41 annual increase
- Band 'B' - £22.65 annual increase

The Chief Officer also provided members with the saving comparisons relating to a precept reduction and pointed out that in his view the services being delivered compared to the precept rise was reasonable and services needed to be maintained and not reduced.

Cllr Harris commented that based on the figures and budget report presented, then clearly the precept will need to be increased, but a clear explanation will need to be available to the community in relation to what the raise in precept will be spent on.

Cllr Horler agreed with the principle as to why the budget needed to be raised, but explained that in his view, people are struggling and taking into account other increases which include a TCBC council tax rise then this potentially will not be tolerated.

Cllr Horler referred to the town centre being at its lowest ebb with footfall and if anymore strain was placed on the public then the town could disappear. An example was that not everyone earns a decent salary and the people that don't will struggle paying an extra £19 per year.

Cllr Horler stated that he didn't disagree that the budget needed to be increased but didn't think that this was the right time to do it. No alternatives to the proposed draft budget were provided by Cllr Horler.

The Chairman commented and disagreed with Cllr Horler stating that the amount that is being requested on a band 'A' property namely £19 per year is reasonable based on the services being provided by the Healthy Blaenavon initiative and other services like the Xmas market.

The Chief Officer explained that the proposed budget was planning for the next two years, and the extra charge will be to provide extra services to the more vulnerable families and less well-off families and to deliver services within the wider community.

The Chief Officer went onto describe the services being provided currently and focused on the recent Xmas market which was a huge success based on the positive feedback from attendees.

Rebecca Smith (Healthy Blaenavon Officer) commented and provided positive examples and case studies on how the services being provided by the Council have supported the vulnerable families that she has been working with and also referred to the services that were provided free of charge at the recent Xmas market.

Rebecca explained that there are lots of families that are struggling but the precept increase is reasonable for those families to be supported and the result of this has been the improvement in their mental health by the lovely services that have been provided by the Town Council.

Rebecca explained that if services were cut then this may have a detrimental effect on some peoples wellbeing.

Cllr James commented that if the council received more money, then more services could be provided to support residents. Without this, then potentially the council could be hindered in their service delivery.

An example provided by Cllr James was that with increased funds then more young people could be supported. Cllr James explained that if the precept was increased then all Councillors needed to be visible in doing something within the community whilst ensuring that communication was kept open.

The Chairman thanked everyone for taking part in a thorough discussion and requested from members a proposer for the budget to be approved and sent to the full council for ratification.

It was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Cowles that the proposed budget is approved for ratification at the next full council meeting.

All members were in agreement except for Cllrs Evans, Horler and Bright.

Resolved: Draft Budget approved for ratification at the January 2022 Full Council meeting.

8. Responsible Finance Officer's Update: To receive the November and December 2021 financial updates.

Mr Kevin Warren (RFO) forwarded to members the November 2021 and December 2021 financial reports electronically in advance of the meeting which detailed the following areas:

- Income and Expenditure
- Credit Card Payments
- Cheque Payments
- Bacs Payments
- Cash Book Transactions
- Bank Reconciliation
- Project Revenue
- Project Expenditure
- Budget
- VAT
- Bank Statements

Mr Warren presented to members each of the above areas of finance for November 2021 and December 2021 and highlighted any relevant information. Members were invited to ask any questions in relation to the areas to clarify.

Members were happy with the presentation. No questions were asked.

It was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Harris that the November 2021 finance updates be accepted.

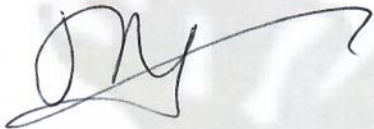
It was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Cowles that the December 2021 finance updates be accepted.

Resolved: Financial updates for November and December 2021 accepted by members.

The meeting was ended at 19:18

Chairman Signed:

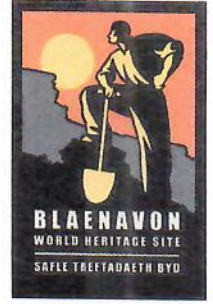
Date: 9/2/22





BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL
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Blaenavon Town Council

Finance Update

January 2022

BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL



Bank Reconciliation 2021-22

Bank Reconciliation

JAN

Opening Balance

Current Account	£147,342.11
Cash in Hand	£11.63
	<hr/>
	£147,353.74

Add Receipts in Period	£33.00
Less Payments in Period	£10,996.89
	<hr/>

Balance at End of Period **£136,389.85**

Balances at Bank

Current Account	£136,378.22
Cash in Hand	£11.63
	<hr/>
	£136,389.85

Clerk

Sign

Handwritten signature of the Clerk, appearing to be 'K. Evans'.

Date

1/2/22

Chairman

Sign

Handwritten signature of the Chairman, appearing to be 'D. Jones'.

Date

9/2/22


BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL

Income & Expenditure Statement 2021/2022



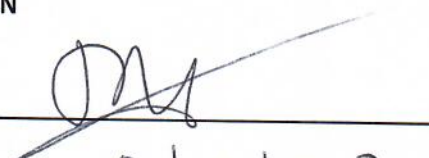
Period	JAN				
	ACTUAL	BUDGET	VAR		
INCOME					
BTC	£ -	£ -	£0.00		
PRECEPT	£ -	£ -	£0.00		
VAT RECEIPTS	£ -	£ -	£0.00		
REVENUE	£ 33.00	£ -	£33.00		
HBO	£ -	£ -	£0.00		
COMMUNITY BREW INCOME	£ -	£ -	£0.00		
OTHER RECEIPTS	£ -	£ -	£0.00		
	£ 33.00	£ -	£33.00		
EXPENDITURE					
SALARY	£ 6,997.38	£ 6,997.38	£0.00		
ELECTION COSTS	£ -	£ -	£0.00		
ESTABLISHMENT COSTS	£ 1,501.62	£ 1,501.62	£0.00		
COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCE	£ -	£ -	£0.00		
HOSPITALITY	£ -	£ -	£0.00		
PROJECTS	£ 2,000.00	£ 2,000.00	£0.00		
GRANTS	£ 72.50	£ 72.50	£0.00		
COMMUNITYBREW	£ -	£ -	£0.00		
VAT	£ 425.39	£ 425.39	£0.00		
	£ 10,996.89	£ 10,996.89	£0.00		

CLERK

SIGN 

DATE 1/2/22

CHAIRMAN

SIGN 

DATE 9/2/22



BLAENAVALON TOWN COUNCIL

Petty Cash transactions 2021/2022

MONTH JAN

DATE	CATEGORY	SUPPLIER	DESCRIPTION	NET	VAT	TOTAL	DATE PAID
						£ -	

Opening Balance £ 11.63
 Less transactions in Period £ -
 Plus reimbursement in period £ -
 Closing Balance £ 11.63
 Cash in Hand **£ 11.63**

CLERK

SIGN

CHAIRMAN

SIGN

DATE

1 | 2 | 22

DATE

9 | 2 | 22

