

**MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GRANTS COMMITTEE OF ABERTILLERY AND
LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL HELD ON 14 December 2022 at 6.00 pm in the
Council Chamber at Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery.**

PRESENT

Councillors: Glyn Smith (Chair), Peter Adamson, Rob Phillips, Mariola Walters

Officers: David Cartwright (Clerk)

Apologies: Graham White

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Graham White.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OR DISPENSATIONS

Rob Phillips declared a personal interest as a trustee of Ffrindiau Tyleri, proposed funding for which was included in one budget line.

22. MINUTES 27 OCTOBER 2022 AND 23 NOVEMBER 2022

The Committee **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of 27 October 2022 were a true and correct record.

The Committee **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of 23 November 2022 were a true and correct record.

23. BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Clerk reminded the Committee that it had already scrutinised the majority of budget proposals for 2023-24 but, in its meeting of 27 October, it had recommended further work on some budget lines. As a consequence, the relevant budget-holders had made some amendments to their proposals that required further scrutiny.

As Chair of the PlaCE Committee, Rob Phillips explained a new proposal to fund a professional feasibility study into community transport options within the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council area. The proposed budget line of £8,500 was based on the average cost of a cross-sample of similar feasibility studies commissioned in various areas of the UK.

The Clerk explained that the People and Communities Committee had increased its proposal for the Christmas lights central contract. On professional advice, it had included a proposal of £20,000 to fund the overhaul and repair of the existing Christmas lights infrastructure. Outline quotes from two prospective contractors had indicated that a budget of around £40,000 would be required for an improved light display as proposed by the Christmas Lights Working Group. The Finance and Grants Committee questioned whether such a large annual sum would be sustainable in the longer term.

Two options for the funding of youth engagement projects had been presented to the Committee in October by the Youth Engagement Working Group. That group had since become the budget-holding Community Empowerment Committee, which now presented the second of those options, unchanged, as its budget proposal. The Committee noted that a very similar proposal for improved provision had been approved by Council two years ago but not carried out due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The Clerk presented minor changes to the Responsible Financial Officer's budget proposals. A notable addition was provision for membership of One Voice Wales. The inclusion of this budget line would enable the Council to consider re-joining the representative body in 2023-24.

The Clerk expressed disappointment that this year's more formal and structured budget-setting process had had little effect in encouraging budget-holders to make difficult decisions about delegated budget lines. The Committee expressed concern that the overall budget proposals showed a considerable year-on-year increase even though the 2022-23 budget was on course to be significantly underspent for the third year in succession.

24. PRECEPT

The Clerk explained that the Council was currently forecast to hold around £85,000 more on 31 March 2023 than was necessary to protect the smooth running of the Council. The Committee noted that these resources would enable the Council to fund the 2023-24 budget proposals even if its income did not rise.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that the precept for 2023-24 should be no higher than that of 2022-23 (£289,000).

The meeting ended at 6.41 pm.