

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting

held in the Council Chamber, Emersons Green Town Council,

1900hrs on Thursday 8th December 2022.

- Present:** Councillors Simon Budd (Mayor), Rachael Hunt, Roberta Sunderland, Colin Hunt, Sadik Al-Hassan, Simon Jones, Richard Nichols, and Alka Mehta-Graham.
- Absent:** Councillors Stephen Bassett and Matthew Palmer.
- In attendance:** Town Clerk, Ian Lyons.
- Apologies:** Councillors David Somers (Deputy Mayor), Caroline Johnson, James Hunt, Christopher Edwardson, and Patricia Morgan.
- Public:** No members of the public attended the meeting.
- Notes:** The meeting began at 1905hrs. All resolutions are passed with a majority vote, by a show of hands, unless otherwise stated.

FC_2022.123 Welcome and Introductions.

- Minutes:** Cllr Simon Budd (Mayor) welcomed everyone present at the meeting and explained the emergency procedures.

FC_2022.124 Declaration of Interest – Localism Act 2011.

- Minutes:** Cllr Simon Budd (Mayor) reminded members of the requirement to declare an interest.

FC_2022.125 Public Participation.

- Minutes:** No members of the public were present.

COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION

FC_2022.126 Minutes.

- Motion:** It was moved by Cllr Simon Budd (Mayor), supported by Cllr Colin Hunt, and resolved that:

Resolved: The Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 10th of November 2022, copies having been circulated, be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Mayor.

Minutes: The minutes were signed at the meeting by Cllr Simon Budd (Mayor).

FC_2022.127 Outstanding items from the previous minutes.

Minutes: At the invitation of Cllr Simon Budd (Mayor), the Town Clerk delivered a summary of the work undertaken as a result of the resolutions and action points from the previous meetings. As follows:

- The Dibden Lane Allotments lease and the Vinney Green land transfer are still outstanding. Ian Lyons, Principal Surveyor at South Glos, has previously confirmed that this has been listed for decision at the Executive Committee. A further update has been requested.
- The IT Hardware project is still at the consultation stage.
- The Human Resources consultancy with SLCC has been commissioned and a copy has been circulated.
- Sally Hill has kindly declined the nomination for an Honorary Title.
- The advertising period for the Councillor vacancy ended on November 18th and the only candidate to apply has withdrawn. However, they have applied to volunteer in an alternative role. With elections in May, it may not be sensible to re-advertise.
- The Community Nature Reserve is making progress through the Climate and Nature Working Group and an advert is listed on the agenda.
- The first treasury deposit has been made for £100,000, in consultation with the Finance Committee.
- The agreed Staff Pay and Working Conditions resolutions were implemented and completed in the November payroll.
- The new website is now live and is currently being updated with fresh content.
- Cllr Caroline Johnson asked me to remind Councillors that IT hardware and software are available for Councillors if they request it.
- Likewise, IT support is available to all Councillors and Staff during working hours by calling the Nebula IT support desk on 01454 534009. Of course, if you're using your own equipment and software this may not be fully supported.

OPERATIONS

FC_2022.128 To note any updates from Committees.

Minutes: To begin with, at the invitation of Cllr Simon Budd (Mayor), the Town Clerk directed attention to a circulated report:

Finance Committee

"We are proceeding with adopting Barclays.net, for a small monthly fee, to enable the responsible finance officer to properly administer the bank mandates. This will be important with potential new members requiring a quick adoption on to the mandate after the next local elections.

We discussed a reply from the Citizen's Advice Bureau to our request for information regarding providing an enhanced service for the residents of Emersons Green and invited motions to come forward to a future committee. We discussed and supported a movement between Barclays Bank accounts of £100,000 from our reserves into a Treasury Deposit scheme for a period of 12 months.

We had a lengthy and valuable discussion about budget options and the expectations around enabling delivery of the strategic plan, as well as reducing our reliance on CIL receipts which will naturally be declining over the coming years. This led to the proposed recommendation to the Full Council.

Finally, we approved an extension to the Rialtas contract to enable cloud-based deployment which had many advantages over the current situation which required one office computer to be permanently left on and if interrupted had the potential of preventing work by all office staff.”

Cllr James Hunt (Chair of the Finance Committee).

After this, the Town Clerk also highlighted that the draft Finance Committee minutes had been circulated in order to facilitate an efficient Budget discussion.

Open Spaces Committee

Finally, Cllr David Somers (Deputy Mayor and Chair of the Open Spaces Committee) reported that new interpretation boards have been installed at both ends of Green Lane. In fact, the committee had been busy upgrading the signs across the whole estate, to keep the place looking tidy.

FC_2022.129 To note any updates from Working Groups.

Climate and Nature (CAN).

Minutes: To begin with, at the invitation of Cllr Simon Budd (Mayor), Cllr Roberta Sunderland directed attention to a circulated report, asked the members to read it, and requested for it to be included in the minutes:

“Climate and Nature met on 15th November 2022

New members of the group are Alka Mehta-Graham, Ines Brajovic and Sue Fenton.

We have agreed to meet regularly on the third Tues of the month at 7.00pm.

Photo Competition and Calendar

The photos have been displayed at Lyde Green Community Centre for the last three weeks after being in the Library for two weeks prior to that. All the photos are now on the Town Council website.

The Home Energy Conversation is planned for Tuesday 6th of December at Resound at 8pm.

The launch of the Community Nature Reserve is planned for Thursday 19th January at 7.30 pm at Emersons Green Village Hall. David Tibbatts from Commons Connections has agreed to speak as has Sophie Bancroft from Avon Wildlife Trust. The poster is already out on social media and we plan to extensively poster the area with hard copy posters early in the new year. We are also hoping to have two or three display boards about the CNR in different places in the new year – possibly the Library, and the Village Halls.

Also planning to run a competition to design a logo for the CNR. This could be used as stickers for people to display in their windows when they register their gardens to be part of the CNR.

South Glos have expressed an interest in what we are doing and have asked for a meeting in the new year with a view to developing the idea across other parts of the County to help develop Local Nature Action plans. Our next Climate and Nature meeting is Tues 13th December at 7pm at EGTC offices –(third Tues was too near Christmas so going for the second Tues this month)”

Cllr Roberta Sunderland (Chair of the CAN Working Group).

Events Working Group.

Next, Cllr Alka Mehta-Graham provided a summary of the first Events Working Group meeting which took place immediately prior to Full Council. Essentially, the group had discussed initial ideas, which included a hobby fair, food festival, and enhancing the Annual Town Meeting.

Youth Working Group.

Finally, the Town Clerk circulated a Youth Service report, following two service delivery visits to Creative Youth Network in November.

COMMUNICATIONS

FC_2022.130 Advertising.

Minutes: A circulated poster promoting the Council’s Community Nature Reserve was noted by the Council.

FINANCE

FC_2022.131 Budget.

Minutes: At the invitation of Cllr Simon Budd (Mayor), the Town Clerk provided a presentation of the draft budget for 2023, in paper and electronic format, using the projector as a visual aid, and explained that this included recommendations from a variety of committees and working groups. Then, highlighted the following advice from the Clerk’s Report:

The Finance Committee recommends the budget, copies having been circulated, be approved by the Full Council (24/11/2022).

LEGAL POWER OR DUTY TO ACT

- Finance Committee Terms of Reference Function 1 & 2.
- EGTC Financial Regulations Nov 2022, particularly section 3.
- Local Government Act 1972, s.151.

RECOMMENDATIONS, CONDITIONS, AND OTHER CONTROLS

- Resolve that “The Council approve the budget and precept for 2023/24, copies having been circulated.”

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- To form the basis of financial control for the financial year 2023/24.
- To enable the delivery of the Strategic Plan.
- To allow for growth.
- To reduce trivial referrals to Full Council and Committees by including a sensible contingency.
- To deliver value for money to residents in Emersons Green by rebalancing the ratio between staff costs, routine spending, and the delivery of Council projects.
- To reduce dependency on CIL receipts.
- To maintain the level of capital reserves for key community projects.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS & RISKS

To be clear, this is a budget. It is *not* a commitment to spend. However, it *is* a commitment to raise the precept. On that basis, it is estimated that the proposal could result in an increase of £4 per household per annum (10 percent), or 7.7 pence per week, which would be slightly below the September rate of inflation (10.1 percent). Notably, some of the Council's costs are rising much higher than the rate of inflation. For instance, the Localism charges with South Glos have risen by 16.68 percent. Luckily, with the temporary increase in the Council Tax base, and CIL receipts, the Council is in the fortunate position to be able to cover infrastructure-related costs and make significant progress towards the ambitions in the Strategic Plan.

After this, a short question and answer session took place on the technical details of the presentation. Following this, several Councillors, briefly commented in favour of the budget, without opposition.

Next, the Town Clerk asked the Council to consider increasing the annual budget for Office Maintenance to £1800, and Youth Leisure Room Hire to £21000. This would cover the expected costs of maintenance for the security shutters and provide a budget to hire venues for Youth Clubs.

- Amendment:** After a lengthy discussion on this topic, it was moved by Cllr Sadik Al-Hassan, supported by Cllr Colin Hunt, and resolved that:
- Resolved:** The Council amend the draft budget and precept for 2023/24, copies having been circulated, to include £1800 for Office Maintenance and £21000 for Youth Leisure Room Hire.
- Motion:** Then, it was moved by Cllr Simon Budd (Mayor), supported by Cllr Richard Nichols, and resolved that:
- Resolved:** The Council approves the amended budget and precept for 2023/24, copies having been circulated.

FC_2022.132 Dates and Timings.

Minutes: Cllr Simon Budd (Mayor) announced that the next meeting of the Full Council was scheduled to take place:

Thursday 12th January 2023 at 1900hrs in the Emersons Green Town Council Chamber.

Next, at the invitation of Cllr Simon Budd (Mayor) the Town Clerk invited members to comment on the meeting schedule for 2023, copies having been circulated. No amendments were suggested.

Finally, Cllr Simon Budd (Mayor) concluded the formal business of the meeting at 2015hrs and announced that an informal 'round-table' discussion would take place afterward.