

**MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 8 January 2024

At 7.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	G Meadows J Aitman T Ashby R Smith A Bailey R Crouch G Doughty	J Doughty D Edwards-Hughes D Newcombe J Robertshaw S Simpson J Treloar
Officers:	Adam Clapton Sharon Groth Derek Mackenzie Nigel Warner	Deputy Town Clerk Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	One member of the public.	

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Enright, D Temple and L Cherry (the latter by previously agreed dispensation).

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

Councillor A Bailey joined the meeting at 7:02pm

3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A member of the public was present however did not wish to speak.

4 COUNCIL BUDGET: REVISED BUDGET 2023/24 AND ESTIMATE 2024/25

The Council received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

The Chair asked the Leader of the Council to open the debate. The Leader expressed her appreciation to the Council officers and staff for their prudent management of the council'

budget during 2023/24 which would result in approx. £103,000 being placed into the General Reserves.

The Leader continued, explaining that any increase to the precept to be considered would be under the level of inflation rise and therefore a net deficit. The Council was due to deliver some large projects over the coming financial year including the agreed improvements to the Skatepark and West Witney Sports & Social Club along with the proposed Leys Masterplan which would result in an expense of moving the Works Depot.

The Leader presented her thoughts on the options prepared by the RFO which ranged from a Nil percentage increase in the 2024/25 precept which would require using £238,137 from the General Reserve to a 12.73% increase which would require no additional funds from the General Reserve.

A 6.10% increase would require £124,093, though the majority would immediately be offset by the £103,000 savings made in the 2023/24 financial year.

The Chair opened the floor to further comments from members however there were no further comment made.

A proposal was made by Councillor R Smith and seconded by Councillor J Aitman to approve the two recommendations made by the RFO in his report.

Each recommendation was agreed with eight council members, Collins, Meadows, Aitman, Smith, Bailey, Crouch, Newcombe and Simpson voting in favour, and six council members Ashby, G Doughty, J Doughty, Edwards-Hughes, Robertshaw and Treloar voting against.

A request was made by a member to record names against the vote. All Members were in agreement.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the revised budget for 2023/24 be adopted and,
3. That, the budget for 2024/25 along with its funding from precept and reserves be adopted and,
4. That, the vote be recorded.

5 TO FORMALLY DECLARE THE PRECEPT FOR 2024/25

The Council received and considered the report of the RFO.

At the request of a member, the RFO clarified a difference in the figures quoted in the "Budget Projection for 2024-25 Summary" spreadsheet and his report. The correct figure for the full funding increase being £188.07 rather than £188.87.

No further questions or comments arose and therefore a proposal was made by Councillor R Smith and seconded by Councillor J Aitman for the Council to increase the council tax precept charge by 6.10% to £177.00 for a Band D property for the forthcoming 2024/25 financial year. This would result in an instruction to West Oxfordshire District Council for £1,984,834 to be paid and also resulting in the use of £124,093 from the Town Council General Reserve.

The proposal was agreed with eight council members, Collins, Meadows, Aitman, Smith, Bailey, Crouch, Newcombe and Simpson voting in favour, and six council members Ashby, G Doughty, J Doughty, Edwards-Hughes, Robertshaw and Treloar voting against.

The Chair asked if members would like their names to be recorded against their vote. All Members agreed.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a Council tax precept increase of 6.10% be agreed and,
3. That, the Town Clerk be authorised to sign and serve a precept on the West Oxfordshire District Council, in accordance with the appropriate provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), requiring the District Council to pay the Town Council the sum of £1,984,834 in respect of Council Tax for the town during the financial year 2024/25 and,
4. That, £124,093 be transferred from the Council General Reserve to support the 2024/25 budget and,
5. That, the vote be recorded.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

Resolved:

That in accordance with section (1(2) of the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

7 **UPDATE ON LEYS MASTERPLAN**

With the express permission of the Chair, the Council received a confidential verbal update from the Town Clerk/C.E.O regarding the result of the Planning Application for the redevelopment of The Leys which was discussed at the meeting of the Lowlands Planning Committee at West Oxfordshire District Council earlier in the day.

Resolved:

That, the confidential verbal update be noted.

The meeting closed at: 7.25 pm

Chair