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Minutes of the **Full Council** meeting of Shepton Mallet Town Council that took place in the Council Chamber of Mendip District Council, Cannards Grave Road, Shepton Mallet on **Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2019 7pm.**

**Present:** Councillors T Faith, W Frapple, S Hale, M Harrison, B Height, E Hobbs, C Inchley (Chairman), G John, G Mayall, M Lovell, A McGuire, N Shearn and N Tolson.

**In Attendance:** Charlotte Starkie, Town Clerk and Liz, Evans, Assistant Town Clerk (Finance and Community)

**Public and Press:** 16 members of the public attended.

**Presentation of Allotment Awards**

The Chairman welcomed the recipients of this year's allotment judging completion to the meeting and was pleased to present their awards and certificates.

The awards were made as follows:

Allyn Saxon Drive Allotment site:	Winner – Mr Barber (not present)
Hitchen Lane Allotments site:	Winner - Mr Kingston Runner Up - Mr Altoft Highly Commended – Mrs Philips
Whitstone Road Allotment site:	Winner - Mrs Meadows Runner Up – Mrs Davis Highly Commended – Mrs Meadows

*(8 members of the public left the meeting)*

Public Questions Time. Comments raised in public question time are contained within Appendix A of these minutes.

**07.1 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Jones, Manley and Kennedy.

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Councillor Manley had requested to be granted an extended period of absence to deal with a private matter, which would be monitored to comply with the 6 month ruling of absence in the Local Government Act 1972.

**Resolved that:**

Councillor Manley be granted a period of up to 6 months absence from council and committee meetings to deal with a private matter.

**07.2 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman commended those who has arranged the Remembrance Day event and was pleased that so many had attended to show their respects. He also praised the newly launched Sunday Market (known as the Shepton Experience) for their efforts and wished them well.

**07.3 Declaration of interest of matters related to this agenda**

There were no declarations of interest.

**07.4 Update for PC George Simpson**

PC Simpson informed the meeting of the following:

- Crime numbers remained static with the usual issues of public order, theft and violence against the person. The opening of Subway had triggered some anti-social behaviour and Tesco's continues to attract people causing trouble in the car park. ANPR was being introduced to deter the issue.
- Issues continue to exist in Town Street and St Peter's Terrace between residents, the landlord and offenders. Criminal damage was frequent and there needed to be a long term solution to deter the offenders. PC Simpson offered to take councillors around the area to show them the issues.
- Questions were raised about the landlord, managing agent and police's role in the above mentioned properties to see if the issues could be resolved with collaborative working.
- Councillor Height stated that she was pressing Mendip District Council to open up the space within the Great Otrsy car park to reduce anti-social behaviour.

**07.5 Update from Somerset County Councillor John Parham**

Councillor Parham informed the meeting of the following:

- **Commercial Road Roundabout.** Re-design now completed but had created a mixed reaction. The roundabout will be monitored.
- **Mental Health First Aid Courses** were being provided by the Council for those interested in attending.
- **Learning Disabilities/Independent Living:** As part of the promoting independence strategy SCC are currently focusing on those with a learning disability. So far this year the County Council have moved, with individual's express agreement, 42 people with learning disabilities from residential care to supported living accommodation. This has resulted in a tremendous improvement in their quality of life.
- **Stepping Stones/Independent Living:** Around 150 young people in Somerset leave care every year, and as part of National Care Leavers' Week, SCC are highlighting the urgent need for more Stepping Stone carers to help them on their journey to independent living. Stepping Stones carers welcome young people (usually leaving foster care) into their home and support them with

managing bills, cooking, shopping, gaining employment opportunities and accessing further education. Stepping Stones carers receive a weekly fee plus extra for food and utilities.

- **Climate Emergency Strategy Framework:** A lot of work has been going on behind the scenes since the SCC committed to being Carbon Neutral by 2030 and agreed to work together with all district councils in Somerset on a strategy to do so. Countywide drop-ins and online community consultations on the emerging Climate Emergency Strategy Framework are being throughout November and December.
- **Somerset Rivers Authority:** This month the Somerset Rivers Authority, which is chaired by Somerset County Council, published its annual report. In 2018-19, just over £3.8million was spent on actions designed to protect both people and property across Somerset. Because there is no one simple solution to Somerset's flooding challenges, and everyone in the county is affected in one way or another, the SRA invests in a wide range of actions to reduce flood risks and increase resilience when floods do occur. All works are additional to those carried out by other Flood Risk Management Authorities in Somerset.
- **Dementia Support Groups:** SCC is looking to invest more than half a million pounds to kick-start and extend projects and groups that run day-time activities for people with dementia and provide respite for their unpaid carers. Now two new projects are coming on stream. The Magdalen Environmental Trust, near Chard, is offering once-a-week sessions for adults with dementia and their carers on its organic farm. The dementia café based Wincanton will provide activities, memory stimulation, socialisation, music therapy and respite. Other scheme already supported include: Reminiscence Learning in Wellington; Dementia and Arts Programme run by the Creative Innovation Centre (CIC) in Taunton; The Active Social Minds project in Wells and the Filo project across the County.
- **Unauthorised Highway Works:** Two utility firms have received substantial fines following successful prosecutions by Somerset County Council. BT and Royal Mail both pleaded guilty to several offences relating to unauthorised roadworks. BT were fined a total of £23,000 for offences in Curry Mallett, Bradford on Tone and Bishops Lydeard. Royal Mail were fined £22,000 for offences in Lopen and Tatworth. In addition, both Companies were ordered to pay the County Councils costs.
- **National Recognition Award:** SCC's Locality Manager Chris Denovan has been selected as a finalist for the Lifetime Achievement category in the annual Social Worker of the Year Awards in recognition of her contribution to the profession over four decades.

#### 07.6 Update from Mendip District Councillors

**Councillor Height reported** that she had attended a seminar on deprivation, which while poorly attended, was worthwhile.

SIGNED: ..... (CHAIRMAN) DATE:.....

**Councillor Hobbs reported** that the works at the cemetery were complete. He was aware that there had been several issues, that had impacted on mourners and visitors, and lessons would be learned.

He also reported that the tennis courts at West Shepton Fields were being frequently locked, against the wishes of Mendip District Council, and so action had been taken to ensure that the courts remain open.

**Councillor Inchley reported** that he had attended a meeting between Mendip District Council, Citizens Advice Mendip and Aster Housing to consider all options to assist those facing hardships, by working together.

**Resolved that:**

The reports be noted

**07.7 To consider the minutes from the meetings held on 10<sup>th</sup> September and 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

The minutes of the above meetings were agreed as a true record.

**Resolved that:**

The minutes be signed as a true record.

**07.8 To note the minutes of committee meetings have been circulated**

It was noted that the draft minutes for the meetings below had been circulated:

Policy and Resources: 12<sup>th</sup> November 2019

Open Spaces: 15<sup>th</sup> October 2019

Collett Park Management Committee: 24 September and 5 November 2019

Town Development and Planning Committee: 17 September, 8 and 29 October

Human Resources Committee: 22 October 2019

**Resolved that:**

The minutes be noted.

**07.9 Updates from representatives on external bodies**

**Councillor Harrison from the Chamber of Commerce** reported that the group was newly launched and was putting in efforts to rebuild relationships between businesses both in the town centre and further afield. A monthly meeting would be held as would regular breakfast meetings and business skills seminars.

**Councillor Hale from the Library Community Interest Group** reported that Somerset County Cabinet will be considering the future location of the library at a meeting in December, delayed due to the election. A survey asking about proposed opening times would be circulated to councillors

**Councillor Lovell from the Twinning Association** reported that the association was celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2020. It was encouraging similar groups in the twinning towns to make contact and share experiences.

**Resolved that:**

The report be noted.

SIGNED: ..... (CHAIRMAN) DATE:.....

## 07.10 To consider the draft provisional budget and precept for 2020/21 of £580,252

The Chairman introduced the report which had been circulated to all councillors. The proposal was for an increase of £127,487 on the current precept, taking it to £580,252. A copy of the proposed budget is at Appendix B.

It has been agreed in the committee meetings that additional funds were required in order to move matters forward and bring benefits to the community.

Those additional requirements were for a capital replacement fund which would enable the council to undertake repairs on its assets, namely in Collett Park but also invest more in the town with signage and bins, and for a new member of staff to deliver these new projects. Work was ongoing with the Corporate Plan and the council were at a point of wanting to roll out new projects, but needed funds to deliver them.

Councillors discussed the proposed increase and the following comments were made:

- The money charged on residents will have a detrimental impact on those who are on low incomes, and those with personal debt.
- Whilst councillors were aware that some might struggle with the increase, the increase funds would bring great benefit to the town and the council was keen to get on with the town improvements that will ultimately lead to increased footfall and a greater sense of pride. As much help will continue to be given to organisations like Citizen Advice Mendip, the YMCA Youth Club and the Library service despite them being service that traditionally were funded by other authorities.
- The Council has an emerging vision which was to invest more into the town and bring wider benefits to all. This had been discussed in detail and an action plan with targets was being produced for the spring.

The Chairman concluded the discussion and invited proposals for the budget and precept for 2020/21.

A proposal that the precept be £580,252 was presented by Cllr McGuire and seconded by Councillor Tolson. Councillor Height requested a reported vote:

Recorded Vote:

**Against the precept proposal of £580,252:**

Councillors Height and John

**In favour of the precept proposal of £580,252:**

Councillors Faith, Frapple, Hale, Harrison, Hobbs, Inchley, Lovell, Mayall, McGuire, Shearn, Tolson.

**Resolved that:**

The precept for 2020/21 be £580,252.

It was therefore not necessary to bring the matter to the attention of the Policy and Resources Committee and instead the matter was concluded and the Town Clerk be delegated responsibility to complete the necessary paperwork. For the Council to be alerted to any changes in the tax base that will impact on the change in council tax per household at the next meeting.

**07.11 Date of next meeting**

To note that the next meeting of the council will be held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2020.

**APPENDIX A**

**PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Councillor Height addressed the meeting to convey her disappointment that the council was planning a significant increase to the precept. She identified that there were many people in town who already suffered financial hardship and would struggle to pay any increases. She also stated that many of the projects that the council were planning to fund should be funded and provided by the county and district councils. She also mentioned that other authorities were capped in raising their council taxes and that the town council should have an restrained increase.

Councillor Height stated that she was disappointed that the Policy and Resources Committee had agreed to not make a donation towards the United Charities Shepton Mallet Almshouses's request for a donation of £48,000 over the next 8 years.

A member of public raised his concerns that whilst a small rise on the council tax was acceptable, this proposed increase was excessive, especially at a time of a national election and Brexit. He stated that many people would struggle to pay the increase, and asked councillors to be restrained with its ambitions.

A representative from the Festival of Dogs informed the meeting that due to circumstances outside of their control that it would be necessary to cancel the Festival of Dogs for 2020. They thanked the town council for its ongoing support and would return the donation that had been provided for next year.

The Chairman thanked the representatives of the Festival of Dogs for their contribution in the former years and looked forward to the event in future years.

Activity	2018/19	2019/20	Proposed for 2020/21	Variance between current year and next year
<b>Staff Costs</b>				
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>£123,226</b>	<b>£141,387</b>	<b>£184,919</b>	<b>£43,532</b>
<b>Admin and Office Costs</b>				
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>£67,893</b>	<b>£63,543</b>	<b>£60,050</b>	<b>-£3,493</b>
<b>Election</b>	<b>£5,000</b>	<b>£20,000</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>-£20,000</b>
<b>Open Spaces Committee</b>				
Allotment Rent & Water Rates	£500	£517	£1,300	
Ground Care - Town Environs	£20,000	£20,700	£21,400	
Skate Park - West Shepton	£800	£828	£0	
Town Improvements	£31,000	£30,370	£30,000	
Christmas Lighting	£15,000	£19,000	£20,000	
Markets	£1,000	£1,035	£400	
Events	£5,000	£5,175	£5,000	
Capital Replacement Scheme	£0	£0	£60,000	
Signage and Public Realm	£0	£0	£15,000	
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>£73,300</b>	<b>£77,625</b>	<b>£153,100</b>	<b>£75,475</b>
<b>Collett Park</b>				
Ground Care	£36,000	£37,259	£38,563	
Other Expenditure	£24,500	£25,385	£25,000	
Feasibility Study	£5,000	£5,175	£0	
Depot and Toilets Water Rates	£900	£932	£970	
Trees	£5,000	£5,175	£5,500	
New Infrastructure	£0	£0	£15,000	
Capital Replacement Fund	£0	£0	£15,000	
Collett Festival Exp	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>£71,400</b>	<b>£93,926</b>	<b>£120,033</b>	<b>£26,107</b>
<b>Policy and Resources</b>				
Library grant	£0	£14,000	£15,000	
Snowdrop Festival	£0	£0	£4,000	
Youth Grant	£0	£6,500	£6,500	
Cenotaph Charity	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	
Market Cross Charity	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	
Collett Park Charity	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	
Town CCTV	£8,755	£9,000	£9,350	
Community Donations	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	
<b>People Budget</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£10,000</b>	
Citizens Advice Mendip	£4,500	£10,000	£10,000	
Community Transport	£1,000	£1,500	£1,500	
Mid Somerset Show	£500	£500	£500	
Carnival	£1,000	£1,000	£1,300	
Tourist Information Centre	£6,000	£6,000	£6,000	
Contingency	£0	£0	£5,000	
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>£34,755</b>	<b>£61,500</b>	<b>£82,150</b>	
<b>Total Expenditure Budget</b>	<b>£375,574</b>	<b>£457,981</b>	<b>£600,252</b>	
<b>Income</b>				
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£1,973</b>	<b>£2,939</b>	<b>£20,000</b>	
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>£438,301</b>	<b>£452,765</b>	<b>£580,252</b>	<b>£127,487</b>