

SHEPTON MALLET TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting	Policy and Resources Committee, Item 6.8
Date	17 th November 2020
Author	Charlotte Starkie, Town Clerk Liz Evans, Responsible Financial Officer
Subject	Budget consideration for 2021/22

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 For Councillors to consider and agree the budget requirements for 2021/22.
- 1.2 For Councillors to consider the grant requests as summarised in this report and make a decision in relation to the award of the grants for the financial year 2021-22 and be aware of their impact on the overall council budget for next year. The applications in this report amount to £21,910 and are in addition to the budget proposal.
- 1.3 For Councillors to make a recommendation to Full Council of what the budget needs to be for 2021/22. A budget proposal chart is attached as a separate document Appendix A.
- 1.4 **This report needs to be read in conjunction with the budget chart as notes in this report cross reference to lines within the budget.**

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 It is necessary for this committee to recommend a budget to full council. This is an annual activity and once the budget is recommended, full council will consider the impact that this has on the precept and the demand that is placed on the council tax payer/resident of Shepton Mallet.
- 2.2 Town Councils are asked to be prudent when increasing the precept and to justify any significant increases to those who will be paying. In the current financial climate and with the pandemic continuing into 2021 councillors need to be mindful of the local economic circumstances. However, the council has recently made progress with projects that are identified in the newly adopted town plan, and have created funds to support these over the coming year.
- 2.3 The staff have considered each budget line against last year's actual expenditure and the current position of expenditure at month seven.
- 2.4 Each committee has considered the proposed budgets over the last few months and agree with the contents of the following committee budgets. Committee Chairs may wish to present their budget to the meeting.

3.0 BUDGET PROPOSAL FOR 2021/22

Admin and Office Budget

- 3.1 This is the budget that ensures that the council operates and includes overheads, and should be self-explanatory. This budget does not belong to any committee and is managed by the Town Clerk who reports on it to this committee.
- 3.2 This proposed budget is increased from £60,050 to £65,400.
- 3.3 The Communications budget has been increased to include mobile contracts, online 'Zoom' meeting costs and the 0800 number monthly cost. *See note 2.*
- 3.4 The ICT budget has increased to include monthly costs for the Ibabs meeting Software, as well as continuing to upgrade current ICT. *See note 3.*
- 3.5 The postage budget has been reduced due to mail being sent by electronic means where possible. *See note 4.*
- 3.6 The marketing budget has increased to take into account town branding related costs and recruitment. *See note 5.*

Town Develop and Planning Committee

- 3.7 This committee does not require a budget.

Human Resources Committee/Staff Costs Budget

- 3.8 The Human Resources Committee met on 29th September 2020 and considered its budget requirements for next year. This budget includes staff costs and training. The proposed overall budget has increased from £184,919 to £259,510. *See note 1.*
- 3.9 An organisational review has been undertaken with the recommendation that the staff base must increase if the council wants to improve the town and develop projects. Three new proposed posts have been agreed as follows:
- A full time Communications Officer which is an essential role in a society that is online 24/7 and where there is an expectation to be communicating regularly, especially as the council is now progressing many exciting projects that will impact on the residents of, and visitors to the town and surrounding areas. This would be a full time post with an impact on the budget of an additional £42,000.
- Further proposals are for:
- A casual Environmental Officer who has the expertise to lead on projects which require a knowledge of environmental matters. This would be a part time post with an impact on the budget of an additional £16,000.

- A casual Grants Officer to work closely with the Project Officer to identify areas that have the potential for developments and to identify appropriate sources of funding and to make the relevant applications. This would be a part time post with an impact on the budget of an additional £8,500.

The budget also includes a 3% annual national increment and spinal column progression for staff where appropriate.

See note 1 on the budget proposal chart.

Placemaking & Protection Committee

- 3.10 The Place Making and Protection Committee met on 13th October 2020 and considered its budget requirement for 2021/22.
- 3.11 The overall proposed budget is reduced from £153,100 to £144,350 for the following reasons:
- 3.12 The Markets & Events budget lines have been transferred to the new People & Promotion Committee. *See notes 6 & 7.*
- 3.13 The signage budget in 2020/21 enhanced the existing Earmarked Reserve for this project, no further budget requirement is needed for 2021/22. *See note 8.*
- 3.14 The Council has agreed that it will make a contribution of £6,000 to the Pollinator Project in its first year in partnership with Somerset Wildlife Trust. *(see note 9)*
- 3.15 Councillors requested that £60,000 be added to the Capital Replacement Scheme for 2021/22. *See note 10.*

People & Promotion Committee

- 3.16 The new People & Promotion Committee met on 3rd November 2020 and considered its budget requirement for 2021/22.
- 3.17 The overall proposed budget is £45,500 for this new committee which includes an events budget which previously sat under the old 'Open Spaces' committee, now Placemaking & Protection. *See note 11.*

Collett Park Management Committee

- 3.18 Collett Park Management Committee met on 20th November 2020 and considered its budget requirement for 2021/22.
- 3.19 The overall proposed budget has increased from £120,033 to £122,750 to take into account inflationary costs to services. *See notes 12 to 15.*
- 3.20 The New Infrastructure and Capital Replacement Funds will be added to in 2021/22 for future projects. *See notes 16 & 17.*

Policy and Resources Committee

- 3.21 This committee needs to consider its own budget for next year, and the information prepared takes the budget from £82,150 to £71,300. **In addition to this proposal there are new grant requests which are yet to be agreed and need to be considered at paragraph 6 below.**
- 3.22 Some of the expenditure in this committee cannot be negotiated (ie CCTV, the town council's own charity payments, Community Donations Fund and People's Fund and some of the grants that are within a Service Level Agreement). The remainder are up for consideration.
- 3.23 The Council has agreed that it will make a contribution of £15,000 per annum for a period of 5 years towards the retention of the library in the town centre. The council had made an allowance in the previous years of £14,000 & £15,000 so this does not have a significant impact on the budget. *See note 18. (See separate report on the Library partnership at item 6.10)*
- 3.24 The Council is in a 3-year funding agreement with the YMCA, to fund £6,500 per annum with the option of negotiating this amount annually. 2021/22 will be year 3 of that agreement and the youth club have requested an increase in funding. *(See note 19 & para 6.2 below).*
- An interim outputs report from YMCA Mendip is attached.*
- 3.25 It is recommended that the current Community Donations budget of £10,000 remain as it is. *See note 20.*
- 3.26 It is recommended that the current People's Budget of £10,000 remain as it is. *See note 21.*
- 3.27 The Council is in a 3-year funding agreement with the Citizen's Advice Mendip, paying £10,000 per annum with the option of negotiating this amount annually. They have not requested any additional funds. 2021/22 will be year 2 of that agreement. *See note 22.*
- An interim outputs report from Citizen's Advice Mendip is attached.*
- 3.28 To consider the amount that is paid to the Community Transport Scheme, having made a contribution of £1,500 in the current year. *See note 23.*
- 3.29 Having made a provision to sponsor a show class and have a stall for £500 in 2019-20, the Mid Somerset Show was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The organisers have put in an application to request an additional £1,500 from the council in 2021/22. A separate grant report is attached at item 6.9. The report is attached. *See note 24 & para 6.3 below.*
- 3.30 The council traditionally pays a grant to the carnival club on an annual basis so councillors are to consider the amount that is paid to the Shepton Mallet Carnival, having made a contribution of £1,300 in the current year. *See note 25.*

- 3.31 The Council agreed to assist with the funding of the Snowdrop Festival for a 3-year period, with the second payment of £4,000 having been made in the current year. This was subsequently returned due to the cancellation of the festival due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the organisers have requested an extension to the agreement of one year. 2021/22 will be therefore be year 2 of that agreement. See note 26.
- 3.32 The Tourist Information Office closed at the end of March 2020. A budget for tourism has been allocated to the People & Promotion Committee. See note 27.
- 3.33 The Contingency was for a contribution of £5,000 towards the Cenotaph 100 Group's event. The event was cancelled and therefore no provision needs to be made in 2021/22. See note 28.

4.0 GENERAL RESERVES AND EARMARKED FUNDS

- 4.1 The Council in addition to the revenue income and expenditure budget has general reserves and earmarked funds.

General Reserves

- 4.2 General reserves are to meet unexpected, unavoidable and emergency payments. The opening balance of its general reserves on 1st April 2020 was **£215,126** and this will increase if there is any underspend in the current year that has not been agreed to transfer to an earmarked fund. This is in line with regulations that state that a council must hold between one quarter and one third of its precept.

Earmarked Funds

- 4.3 The current position of the Earmarked Funds (after in year adjustments) are as follows and total £481,576.

Title	Balance	Projected Expenditure
Local Projects Capital	£203,627	£115,500 (Market resurface)
Town Improvements	£87,658	Partially committed to Signage & market resurface additional infrastructure
Skatepark	£7,370	For repairs
Neighbourhood Plan	£13,546	Ongoing
Strawberry Line	£37,000	Committed
Professional fees & Elections	£17,000	
Collett Park Feasibility Study	£10,175	
Town Signage	£37,200	Committed/ongoing
Collett Park Capital Replacement	£39,000	
Library Support	£29,000	2 years' grant allocation
Total	£481,576	

5.0 THE PRECEPT

- 5.1 The current year's budget is **£580,252**. The staff have predicted a small underspend this year, however, it is very difficult to state exactly what that will be, but any underspend is either accrued into the new year or placed in a relevant ear marked fund or put in the general reserves.
- 5.2 The precept for the current year is also **£580,252**. This can be different to the budget of the council. This is the charge that is placed on tax payers to cover or contribute towards the council's budget.
- 5.3 The committee budgets as listed above have an overall increase on the council's budget of £108,839 bringing the total budget for next year to £689,091. However, the grant requests below have an additional impact on that amount.**

6.0 GRANT REQUESTS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 6.1 There are several grant requests for either new funding or additional funding and councillors must agree to each separate request before it can agree to the total budget and precept for this council for next year. The applications below amount to £21,910 and are in addition to the budget proposal above.

6.2 £1,400 from the Shepton Mallet Twinning Association

The Twinning Association proposes to host two official receptions in 2021, for guests from Oissel Sur Seine and for guests from Misburg. As part of the civic responsibility of Shepton Mallet Town Council, the receptions would take place in Mendip District Council's chamber for guests, hosts and councillors.

The Twinning Association are requesting funding towards the receptions, the Town Clerk and RFO are proposing an amount of £1,400 (£700 per reception) towards the costs of catering for the events.

It would be suggested that the monies are not paid until the council have confirmation that the events will take place.

6.3 An additional £3,500 for the Mendip YMCA

The Council agreed to assist with the funding of the youth club and entered into a 3-year agreement to fund £6.5k per annum with the option of negotiating this amount annually. 2021/22 will be year 3 of that agreement and the youth club have proposed an increase in funding.

The youth club at Shepton costs circa £13k per annum to deliver and additional funding for the next financial year has not yet been secured with the fundraiser working on funding bids and applying for all available grants.

The organisers of the Shepton group would like to request additional funding from the Town Council to increase the youth provision in Shepton and deliver

at least 2 youth clubs a week, provide more youth work and involve young people in social action in the community.

The Town Clerk and RFO are proposing an amount of £10,000, which is an increase of £3,500 from the current year.

6.4 £1,500 from the Mid-Somerset Show

This request is for an additional £1,500 to the £500 that the council has previously contributed, to assist with the running costs of the Mid-Somerset Show 2021. Due to the cancellation of the 2020 show due to Covid 19, no income was received. The grant will help to ensure the future of the show and to put on a 'bigger and better' show in 2021 on their new site.

6.5 £6,960 from The Rubbish Art Project

To create a year of activities for the LGBTQ community (and its friends). To work closely with the community in Shepton Mallet on the creation of a large rainbow (made from colour coordinated recycling, plastics, unusable toys), that will be a 'Friends of Dorothy' installation as part of the planned 'Wizard of Woz' exhibition.

6.6 £3,750 from the Wassail Theatre Company

To employ freelance community theatre practitioners to deliver a Youth Theatre and summer school project in Shepton Mallet, for the benefit of local children & young people. The grant would mean participants' fees to take part in the activity are kept to a minimum.

The grant will enable the delivery of 50 weekly sessions over five terms between January and December 2021 and a week-long summer holiday performing arts workshop. Each term and the summer holiday activity will culminate in a celebration performance, shared with families.

6.7 £4,000 for year one and a further £8,500 over another 2 years from Active and In Touch (A&IT)

To consider the grant request from A&IT for the amount of £4,000. A total amount of £12,500 to be paid over 3 years, 2021/22 being the first year. If agreed, this would be subject to a Service Level Agreement signed by Shepton Mallet Town Council and A&IT.

The grant would help the organisation to combat isolation and loneliness of adults in Shepton Mallet and surrounding villages to improve the health and well-being of individuals and therefore, the community.

To provide support and friendship to individuals who feel lonely through befriending, individual support and establishing a Friendship Community.

6.8 £800 from SWEDA

To consider the grant request from SWEDA (Somerset and Wessex Eating Disorders Association), for the amount of £800. The grant would be used to continue the support SWEDA give to current and new clients.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Committee must now consider the budget, including the grant requests, decide if it wishes to proceed with this budget or an amended budget and consider the impact this, or an amended increase, has on the council tax payers.
- 7.2 If Councillors wish to make an amendment to the proposed budget as contained in this report, they are requested to submit counter budget proposals, illustrating where savings could be made, to the Town Clerk and Chairman of the council, as soon as possible, and in order for a revised budget to be prepared and then re-considered at the meeting on 12th January 2021.
- 7.3 If this proposed budget is agreed then it will be submitted to the full council meeting on 1st December 2020 for consideration.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 For Councillors to consider the information contained in this report.
- 8.2 For Councillors to consider the grant applications and to agree if they award the following:
- £1,400 to the Shepton Mallet Twinning Association
 - £3,500 to Mendip YMCA (in addition to what it currently receives)
 - £1,500 to the Mid-Somerset Show (in addition to what they receive)
 - £6,960 to the Rubbish Art Project
 - £3,750 to the Wassail Theatre Company
 - £4,000 (year 1) to A&IT
 - £800 to SWEDA (Somerset and Wessex Eating Disorders Association)
- 8.3 For Councillors to consider the budget proposed and to agree the following
- a. to submit as it is to the full council meeting on 1st December 2020.
 - b. or to submit written counter proposals, illustrating where savings can be made, to the Town Clerk and Chairman by Friday 11th December for a new budget to be proposed back to this committee at the meeting on 12th January 2021.