

**LOUGHBOROUGH AREA COMMITTEE
16TH DECEMBER 2020**

PRESENT: Councillors Boldrin, Bolton, J. Bradshaw, Brennan, Draycott, Forrest, Goddard, Hamilton, C. Harris, K. Harris, Mercer, Miah, Morgan, Parsons, Parton, Smidowicz, Tillotson and Ward

Strategic Director; Environmental and Corporate Services
Head of Financial Services
Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces
Head of Neighbourhood Services
Head of Leisure and Culture
Head of Strategic Support
Democratic Services Officer NWLDC (TD)
Democratic Services Officer (SW)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Bailey and Campsall

The Head of Strategic Support stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. He also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED that Councillor Tillotson be appointed as Chair of the Committee for the 2020/21 Council year.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED that Councillor Bolton be appointed as Vice-chair of the Committee for the 2020/21 Council year.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Bailey, Campsall and K Harris.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6th January 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and will be signed.

5. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

The following disclosures were made:

- i) Councillor Miah disclosed a personal interest in item 7 – Loughborough Special Expense Draft Budget 2021/22, as the Council’s appointed representative to Fearon Hall Community Association.
- ii) Councillor C Harris disclosed a personal interest in item 7 – Loughborough Special Expense Draft Budget 2021/22, as an allotment holder.
- iii) Councillor Ward disclosed a personal interest in item 7 – Loughborough Special Expense Draft Budget 2021/22, as a trustee at Gorse Covet Community Association.

6. QUESTIONS UNDER COMMITTEE PROCEDURE 12.8

No questions were submitted.

7. LOUGHBOROUGH SPECIAL EXPENSE DRAFT BUDGET 2021/22

Councillor Smidowicz left the meeting at 6:25pm.

Councillor K Harris joined the meeting at 6:39pm.

A report of the Head of Finance to advise the Loughborough Area Committee on the draft Loughborough Special Expense Budget for 2021/22, was submitted (item 7 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Strategic Director for Environmental and Corporate Services, the Head of Finance, the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces, the Head of Leisure and Culture, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and the Head of Strategic Support attended the meeting to provide assistance in consideration of this item and gave the following responses to questions raised:

- i) The loss of income due to cancellation of the Loughborough Fair in Autumn 2020 had been balanced off from the Council’s Covid Emergency Fund to avoid any impacts on the Rate or balances in the next financial year.
- ii) The quantity of CCTV charged to Loughborough Special Rate had remained unchanged, but this had increased as a proportion of costs due to less cameras being monitored overall. The costs charged to Loughborough had then increased due to annual increases in service charges.
- iii) A breakdown was provided for the Festive Decorations and Illuminations costs. It was explained that the proposed £7400 increase in funding for this area for 2021/22 was mainly due to more time being spent in this area by the Head of Leisure & Culture and the Markets and Fairs team in delivery within Government Covid-19 secure guidelines, whilst maintaining the present level of service.

- iv) The savings in the budget for Community Grants were taken from the Loughborough Grants budget following a service review. Ahead of the Community Development & Engagement and Loughborough Grants being amalgamated into a new scheme.
- v) The proposed increases in Support Service Recharges were due to increases in salary costs for all staff earning under £24,000 per annum, and the identified increases in time spent in individual areas was as a result of detailed service reviews undertaken by Heads of Service. It was agreed details of these reviews would be circulated to Members outside of the meeting.
- vi) Overall income gained from public toilets had continued to fall as consumer use moved towards toilets provided by retailers, leading to the decision to close Biggin Street toilets to allow funds and staff time to be allocated for maintenance of marketplace toilets in 2021/22. It was also explained that the relevant officer had advised an Equalities Impact Assessment was not required for this decision*.
- vii) Following queries on provision of bus shelters, it was explained that although the Council had an obligation to maintain several current shelters there was not capital funding presently available for provision of additional shelters. It was also clarified that there would be additional cleaning and maintenance costs arising from any new bus shelters and it would be unlikely for any advertising revenue to be sufficient to address this.
- viii) Covid-19, rather than a potential no-deal Brexit was the primary reason for anticipated reduced trader confidence and footfall in the town centre for 2021/22.
- ix) Exact clarification on the Council Tax Base and adjustments from previous years could not be provided until the base was calculated in January 2021 and any subsequent adjustments taken into account in the final approval of the budget. However, the 1.99% increase in the Loughborough Special Rate was confirmed as a definite proposal. It was agreed that clarification on these and the total District/Capital Charges for 2021/22 would be provided outside of the meeting.
- x) It was confirmed that the proposed new centre at Thorpe Acre was one of the Community Hubs in the draft budget and had been allocated £6500 for 2021/22 as in previous years.
- xi) It was also advised that any additional expenditure for the Loughborough Special Expenses Budget would directly lead to an increase in the budget deficit and thus additional use of reserves.

**Since the meeting, the Head of Leisure and Culture had advised that the intention was to complete Equality Impact Assessments for various aspects prior to the meeting of the Cabinet on 11th February 2021, where the final budget would be presented.*

RESOLVED

1. That the Loughborough Area Committee note the draft Loughborough Special Expense budget for 2021/22 set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
2. That Cabinet be recommended to remove £6500 of Community Hub funding for Thorpe Acre Community Centre, and £7000 of the planned increase in the budget for Festive Decorations and Illuminations from the draft budget, whilst also taking looking into any underspends in the funds allocated to Parks and Sports Grounds and;
3. That these funds instead be utilised to keep the Biggin Street Toilets open on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays
4. That Cabinet be recommended to ask officers to investigate and report to the Loughborough Area Committee on future options for the financing of additional bus shelters within the Loughborough Special Expense Area.
5. That the Loughborough Area Committee wishes that as part of the next Constitutional Review, its authority to commission officers to produce reports for consideration at its future meetings be re-instated.

Reasons

1. To enable the views of the Committee to be sought on the draft Loughborough Special Expenses for 2021/22 in accordance with its terms of reference, prior to the final Cabinet report on the 11th February 2021 and Council on the 22nd February 2021.
- 2&3. To facilitate the retention of Biggin Street toilets without significantly drawing on reserves.
4. To enable the Loughborough Area Committee to better understand the costings around provision of bus shelters in the Loughborough Special Expenses Area.
5. To allow the Loughborough Area Committee to commission officers to produce reports in order to make future recommendations to Cabinet.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 18th January 2021 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services

Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.

2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Loughborough Area Committee.

