

The Charter Trustees for Harrogate

Minutes of the meeting held at the Civic Centre, Harrogate on Monday 4 November 2024 commencing at 4.00 pm.

Councillors: Councillor Chris Aldred. Councillors Philip Broadbank, Sam Gibbs, Michael Harrison, Paul Haslam, John Mann, Monica Slater and Andrew Timothy.

Officers present: Jennifer Norton, Assistant Director Legal; Karen Iveson, Assistant Director Finance; and Elizabeth Jackson, Principal Democratic Services Officer.

48 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Lacey and Mike Schofield.

49 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

50 Public Participation

No public questions or statements had been received.

51 Budget requirement for Harrogate Town Council

A report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) seeking the views of the Charter Trustees on the proposed budget and precept for the new Harrogate Town Council.

Karen Iveson, the Assistant Director Resources and RFO to the Charter Trustees, introduced the report and reminded Members that North Yorkshire Council was required to anticipate a budget and precept for the new Harrogate Town Council for its first year of operation under the Local Government Finance (New Parishes)(England) Regulations 2008. The recommendation of the Charter Trustees would be included in a report to North Yorkshire Council on 13 November for final decision. The agreed budget figure would then be incorporated in the Reorganisation Order.

In order to mitigate financial risk in the first year of operation a loan facility had been offered by North Yorkshire Council of up to £100k which could be used as an operational contingency if required by the new town council, subject to terms and conditions.

Based on informal feedback already received from the Charter Trustees, the report set out a suggested range for the budget for consideration:

Summary	Budget £000	Comments
Key staff	125	Full time town clerk plus admin support
Minimum running costs	60	Premises, insurance, audit and other support fees (finance and legal) etc
Civic duties/events	26	
Set up costs	51	Interim clerk, equipment and website
Contingency	50 - 250	Contingency for operational risk
Total	312 - 512	

A precept of £312k would give a Council Tax Band D charge of £10.98 for 2025/26, and a precept of £512k would give a Council Tax Band D charge of £18.01 for 2025/26. Appendix B set out alternative budgets based on different levels of contingency.

The Chair referred to the £262k running costs detailed in the table and Members concurred with the figure. The discussion then moved on to the contingency figure, which covered service and operational contingency. Members each stated their preferred contingency figure, which ranged from £50k to £150k. Key points raised were:

- The first year of operation of a town council would be for vision and strategy to be agreed, and no services would be delivered.
- A loan would mean interest payments would need to be made and to ensure the success of the new council this should be avoided
- A town council would also have the opportunity to develop services which would generate income and offset the requirement to levy a precept
- In the first year a town council would operate allotments, be a formal consultee on planning applications, have a Mayor and undertake civic duties. There may also be the opportunity to make grants to local organisations, support events and undertake work on a Neighbourhood Plan.
- It was confirmed that whilst a town council was not obliged to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan, if there was a town council it would be the responsible body for developing a Neighbourhood Plan

It was moved and seconded that a contingency figure of £100k be included in the budget, giving an overall budget of £362k.

On a vote being taken four Members voted for the motion, three Members voted against and there was one abstention.

Resolved

That the Charter Trustees recommend a precept of £362k for Harrogate Town Council for 2025-26.

52 Any Other Items

There was no urgent business

53 Date of Next Meeting

14 November 2024 at 10 am

The meeting concluded at 4.45 pm.