

Minutes of the Budget Meeting of
Frodsham Town Council



Held on Monday 12 January 2015 at 7.30pm

In the Lounge, Frodsham Community Centre, Fluin Lane, Frodsham

Present: Cllrs Warren (Chairman), Sutton, Bondi, Brown, Dawson, Pusey, Pennington, Redhead, Riley, Oulton, Taylor, Shearn, and Wakefield. Mr. J Wild (Town Clerk), Mrs. H Catt (Service Manager), and around 7 members of the public.

The personal interests of Cllr SL Riley and Cllr A W Dawson are noted on the basis that they are both elected members of this Council and CWAC. Cllr Dawson is also a member of the Police and Crime Panel and Chair of the Executive Committee of Castle Park Trust. Cllrs Dawson, Pusey, Riley and Wakefield are members of Frodsham Foundation. Cllr Pusey is a trustee of Frodsham Community Association, Chair of Love Frodsham, and Chair of Sutton Parish Council. Cllr Shearn is a trustee of Frodsham Youth Association. Cllr Riley is a member of Castle Park Trust.

No	Item	Note/Decision/Action
1	Apologies	Cllrs Ashton, Wales and Kelly
2	Declarations of Interest	As above. Also Cllr Oulton as occasional employee of Groundwork Cheshire, provider of training to FTC, and member of Friends of John Williamson. Cllr Riley as member of sub-regional Flood Committee. Cllr Wakefield re London Road allotments,
3	Right for the public to speak	<p>Ms Nicola Mikoleizik spoke on behalf of the Frodsham Youth Association. She thanked the Council for their help in previous years, and expressed the hope they would be able to help the Association again this year, not least as the support of FTC could open other funding doors for the Association.</p> <p>The Club was now running on Friday and Saturday nights, with Duke of Edinburgh Award running on Wednesdays. Nicola was proud especially of the latter, which had brought the scheme within the reach of children who might otherwise not have been able to afford to take part. A Music Night was running on Tuesdays.</p> <p>A politics group was about to start up. This would involve young people in matters regarding citizenship. For example, a trip to Westminster was planned. The Council would be invited to get involved with that group.</p> <p>There had also been successful work with NEETS. Councillors had helped with getting skills and opportunities for those young people who were not in education, employment or training. Cllr Brown had helped some with driving lessons.</p> <p>Nicola felt the Association helped Frodsham fund useful activity for its young people, which helped reduce anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>It was suggested that Council should see the accounts of any body asking for funds. Youth Association accounts were easily available, and they were very happy to share their financial position with FTC. It was also recognised that the Association had provided good information on its activities to the Council in the past.</p> <p>A group of four young people from the Association shared with the Council the things that they found most enjoyable and useful, provided by the Association. These included cooking, games, and music.</p> <p>Finally Nicola expressed appreciation for the recent firework display and the new crossing on the A56, both things led by the Council.</p> <p>Dr Geoff Sharpe updated the Council on the work that was being done to repair St Laurence's. Grants had been made available, but over time costs had risen, and there could still be funding gaps. There was also a problem in getting some funding bodies to meet their obligations, which might require legal action by the St Laurence's.</p> <p>The good news was that work was due to begin 19 January. The</p>

		<p>granting of HLF funds meant that the Church had to establish itself as a Heritage Property. This would have the effect of opening up to the public to a greater extent Frodsham's only Grade 1 listed building. Over Christmas the Church had been very busy.</p> <p>Geoff was not asking FTC for money at this stage, but this might become necessary later – there might at least be the need to ask for FTC help in bridging temporary funding gaps.</p> <p>Mr. Liam Jones expressed the hope that FTC would not this evening decide to raise the precept for Frodsham. He felt this would be unwelcome to residents, and that much had been achieved in recent years without increases.</p> <p>He also expressed a hope that the Council would consider placing a defibrillator close to Hayes Crescent, in a suitable phone box.</p>
4	<p>Agreement on budget requirements for 2015-16</p>	<p>The Chairman introduced the Clerk's budget proposals. These were for a balanced Running Costs and Capital/Projects budget for 2015/16. The Clerk had printed a proposal that would lead to a reduction of a few pence in Precept this year, compared to last.</p> <p>Cllr Dawson said he would not support an increase should one be proposed (the Clerk's proposal being for no increase), and said the Council should be proud of the overall fall in real terms in precept that Frodsham had achieved in recent years. Despite this, spending needs had been met. Everyone wanted to see maximum benefit for the precept raised.</p> <p>He said that the proposed boundary changes (which were NOT taken into account in the present proposal) might be considered in working out the precept. IF the forthcoming changes would support an increase in the precept sought WITHOUT further increasing the amounts residents had to pay, FTC should ask for this.</p> <p>The Chair said that, while he agreed with this, there could be some circumstances in which residents wanted new things – traffic crossings, a swimming pool for example – where in fact they might be very happy to pay additional Council tax for these. They should of course have the right to say if that was the case.</p> <p>There was discussion over the amount set aside for land purchase in the budget. Some Councillors wondered whether it was enough, given some of the potential sites being considered for expansion of the cemetery. We had no accurate figures, and no land would be purchased without proper valuation. But it was important to keep a sufficient ring fenced budget.</p> <p>There was scope perhaps to fund any purchase in other ways, perhaps in partnership with CWAC, for example – subject to the financial aspects being satisfactory to the Council. Any land purchased ahead of need could provide a potential source of income.</p> <p>On balance it was agreed to leave the budgeted figure at £30K.</p> <p>It was agreed that the proposed Running Costs and Capital/Project Budgets be adopted for 2015/16.</p>
5	<p>Consider and set precept for 2015-16</p>	<p>Following earlier discussion about not wishing to see an increase in cost to residents, but being content to see an increase that would be offset by changes to the boundaries to come in April/May, it was agreed that the Clerk's proposed precept of £38.37 be adopted, subject to the Clerk considering whether a small increase (perhaps in the order of 2%) could be sustained without giving rise to an increase to the charge to residents, allowing for new residents coming to Frodsham in the new year after boundary changes .</p> <p>Clerk to consider and to submit precept request as appropriate.</p> <p>Action: Clerk</p>

6	Any other business	<p>FTC had been asked by CHALC to support its campaign to oppose suggestions from Central Government that a cap be placed on the ability of local councils to raise precept, without a referendum being generated.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were made;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was an argument for proper control of money raised through taxation by councils. Not least if they planned to take on new services e.g. from Borough Councils. • There was also an argument for maximising the public's say in what money was raised and how it should be spent. • Town/ parish precepts were at a low base, so even modest increases could look high in %age terms. • CWAC had, unlike some Borough Councils, protected local precepts though passing on the Council Tax subsidy. • Frodsham was charging, and had for many years charged, a substantially lower than average precept. • The main problem was the cost and burden of a referendum – this was to be resisted. <p>FTC was in accord with the NALC view, and would write by the due date of 15th January, in support of the NALC campaign to oppose the suggested cap and referendum.</p> <p>Action: Chair/Clerk</p> <p>Cllr Dawson asked the Clerk to include in the next agenda recent events in France. He felt FTC might, as a Council which had itself had its website hacked by extremists, wish to reflect on what had happened.</p> <p>Action: Clerk</p>
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The meeting closed at 8.30pm

Signed _____ Dated _____