

EXPENDITURE OF RESERVES WORKING GROUP

Officer Contact: Ian Hunt, Democratic Services Manager, 01494 421208

Wards affected: All High Wycombe Town unparished wards

PROPOSED DECISION

- (i) That the Committee considers whether it wishes to establish a working group to consider the expenditure of reserves.
- (ii) In the event that the Committee wishes to establish a working group, the proposed terms of reference for the group, as set out in paragraph 6 below, be agreed.

Reason for Decision

To invite the Committee to consider whether or not it wishes to establish an informal working group to consider expenditure of reserves, and present recommendations to the Town Committee on such matters.

Corporate Implications

1. The High Wycombe Town Committee is an advisory committee. Any recommendations from the informal working group can be considered by the Town Committee initially. The Town Committee may then refer any recommendations on to Cabinet for consideration.

Executive Summary

2. At their last meeting prior to the District Council Elections, the High Wycombe Town Committee suggested that an informal working group should be established to consider the expenditure of its reserves. It was agreed at that time that a report should be presented to the first meeting of the Town Committee following the Elections, to consider whether the Committee wishes to pursue this. In addition, it was agreed that a draft terms of reference should also be presented for consideration.
3. As set out later in the agenda under Information Sheet 03/2015 (item 8) – Budgetary Control Report Out-turn 2014/15 - the current level of total reserves for the Town Committee is £636,175. Should the Committee wish to proceed with the establishment of a working group, it is recommended that representatives from Finance and Community attend the meetings of the working group in order to be able to provide an overview and background on the key issues and work of the Committee to assist the group's discussions on any proposals to use the level of reserves.
4. It should be noted that the High Wycombe Town Committee is an advisory committee of the Council. Therefore, any recommendations the Town Committee receive from an informal group, can be considered by the Town Committee, although the Town Committee would need in turn to recommend to

Cabinet any proposals in relation to the use of reserves.

5. In order to manage the operation of the working group, it is suggested that the membership be no greater than 8 members. The group would set up its own meetings as and when required, and that representatives from Finance and Community support the meetings by attending to aid discussion and provide background as appropriate. Any recommendations made by the working group to the Town Committee should be presented in the form of a report to the Town Committee, to ensure a clear mechanism is in place to consider them. The working group would not be open to the public.
6. Accordingly, should the Committee wish to establish an informal working group, the following terms of reference are proposed:
 - The informal working group be established for the sole purpose of considering the current level of reserves for the High Wycombe Town Committee.
 - Membership of the informal working group to be a maximum of 8 members, from within the High Wycombe Town Committee.
 - The working group be chaired by the Chairman of the High Wycombe Town Committee.
 - Meetings of the working group be held as and when required.
 - Recommendations from the working group be presented to the September meeting of the High Wycombe Town Committee (15 September) in the form of a report. The Town Committee will then consider the recommendations, and decide to either accept, reject or amend them, for further recommendation then on to Cabinet. This will also enable any proposals to be included within the overall budget process for the Council.
 - Meetings of the working group not be open to the public, and be supported by representatives from Finance and Community.
 - The first meeting of the working group receive a brief summary from Finance and Community officers on the reserves and issues that the working group may like to consider as part of its work, in order to provide an overview of current key issues, and assist Members with their deliberations.

Background and Issues

7. The Committee is invited to decide whether or not it wishes to establish an informal working group to discuss its level of reserves.

Options

8. The Committee may decide not to support the establishment of a working group and that the full Committee should consider the matter.

Conclusions

9. The Committee is invited to consider the proposal outlined above.

Next Steps

10. If a decision is made to establish an informal working group, members are invited to express an interest to serve on the group, and the date of the group's first meeting will be set up accordingly.

Background Papers

Minutes of High Wycombe Town Committee meetings 20 January & 3 March 2015.