**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BAWTRY TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN THE NEW HALL ON MONDAY 22nd JANUARY 2024 at 7.00PM**

**Present:** Cllrs: A. Claypole, D, Kirkham, D Cartwright, S, Young, D. Kirby, P. Holland

J. Linsley, I. Greer, G. Scott, D Gale, J Gale, K. Killeen.

Mrs. A Harrison – Clerk to the Council

**In Attendance**: Ward Councillor R. Blake. 3 members of the public.

**23/24/188** Receive Apologies and Approve Reasons for Absence

 J. Gale, D. Cartwright (reasons provided to members).

**Resolved:** That the reasons for absence be approved.

**23/24/189** Receive Declarations of Interest (other than standing interests) - None

**23/24/190** Agree Confidential Items - None

**23/24/191** Public Discussion Period

* Question raised about further progress in respect of the operation of the Memorial Sport Ground and BARS.
* Club representatives indicated they were pausing payment to BARS for the annual club fees, simply while they were seeking assurances as to the forthcoming season & in particular ground maintenance.
* Noted Charity Commission meeting with BARS on 29th January although Council representatives had not been advised and were awaiting an invite.

**23/24/192** Internal AuditReview - Review the system of internal control and the system of internal audit

Members reviewed the system of internal control and internal audit in accordance with Regulation 4 & 6 of the Audit Regulations.

**Resolved**: That an appointment of an internal auditor be deferred & agreed in due course.

**Resolved**: That following consideration of the review of the system of internal control it was agreed that there were no outstanding matters that required attention.

**Resolved:** Ivor Greer agreed to undertake the members audit review at least 6 monthly.

**23/24/193** Review & Approve Financial Risk Assessment

Members sought clarity on a number of points and asked for additions regarding the cemetery with the Clerk to seek providers for staff training.

 **Resolved:** That the financial risk assessment be approved subject to the above.

**23/24/194** Consider the Revenue Budget 2024-25 & set the precept

 Members considered the Clerks budget report and estimated budget revenues. Discussed at length the projects that the Council needed to undertake and the additional assets/liabilities the Council would likely need to fund in 2024-25, in particular Wharf Street playpark and the Memorial Sports Ground (MSG). With the current trustees of the charity wanting to step back and no firm plans about new trustees it was foreseeable that the Council, as landlord, could see a reversion of the lease or the need to invest significantly in the operation to ensure it was viable in the short term. Members had significant concerns about the impact on the precept if they were to agree the Clerk’s recommendation of a 30% increase to cover the MSG & play park.

 Members also discussed the significant costs needed to refurbish the car park, which was seen as a priority (and the need to refurbish the New Hall). The car park refurbishment would be taken from reserves raised from pay & display receipts (not from an increase in the precept), but this would not cover the full costs.

In light of the above it was acknowledged that it was not appropriate to fund new assets/liabilities (if these became the Councils responsibility) from car park receipts as such receipts were not yet sufficient to cover the cost of the car park refurbishment never mind fund new liabilities. Historically for around 13 years the precept had not been increased at all which had caused there to be an overreliance on car park income to fund all the services that the Town Council delivered. This had been corrected to some extent in recent years but new assets or liabilities did need to be funded by the precept, at least until there was a surplus of car park income.

The alternative (which members also considered) was to decline to support new services such as the MSG and weighed up what was likely to be in the best interests of residents.

Members initially proposed a 30% increase but this was not carried.

 (Members proposed and approved a 10% increase but suspended standing order 7 to allow a further vote as the majority of members were immediately unhappy with the decision).

**Resolved:** That the budget be agreed with a 20% increase in the precept to £88,467 for 2024/25 with members to consider a Public Works Board loan at a future meeting to supplement any shortfall in car park funding to reduce pressure on the precept this year. If necessary this would allow some reserves to be utilised on non-car park costs, including for the MSG.

Members noted the above would equate to an increase in the annual cost for a Band D property of £11.05 per annum, from £53.62 in 2023/24 to £64.67 in 2024/25 (this increase included a slight rise due to the lower tax base).

Cllr Claypole as Mayor to prepare a report for publication highlighting the reasons for the increase.

**23/24/195** Consider Commission of MSG Structural Survey

 **Resolved:** That an independent structural survey be sought by the Clerk who would appoint a suitable surveyor under delegated powers.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 8.55pm.

**Chair: ……………………………………………. Dated…………………………………………**