

Minutes of a meeting of the **SPALDING TOWN FORUM** held in the Meeting Room 1, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Thursday, 15 February 2018 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

J D McLean (Chairman)
G R Aley (Vice Chairman)

D Ashby
G K Dark

R Gambba-Jones
C J Lawton

G J Taylor

Community Representatives: Pastor K Taylor (Churches Together in Spalding and District) and R Perkins (Castle Sports Complex Bowls Club).

In Attendance: The Head of Finance, the Democratic Services Officer and the Press.

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors A M Newton, G A Porter, P A Williams and H Drury, together with George Scott (Spalding Transport Forum).

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were noted.

It was requested that County Councillors covering the Spalding area be invited to all future meetings of the Spalding Town Forum.

27. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

There were no declarations of interest.

28. DRAFT SPALDING SPECIAL EXPENSES 2018-19

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director Commercialisation (S151) which provided information on the draft Spalding Special Expenses 2018-19. Members had requested that the Forum be able to review the proposed Spalding Special Expenses with a view to submitting comments/feedback to be included within the final budget report to be considered by Council on 28 February 2018.

The following issues were raised:

Chairman's Special Events budget

Section 5.10 of the report made reference to a Chairman's Special Events budget. The Chairman commented that he had not initially been aware of this and that upon further investigation,

Action By

CM

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some officers had not been either – the Forum was advised that the budget had been set up a number of years ago in order to allow the Chairman some access to money if required for a particular contingency. It was agreed that the budget should remain however, there should be more awareness of its existence and use by members of the Spalding Town Forum and officers.

Information provided/scrutiny of Spalding Special Expenses going forward

The Forum was unhappy with the level of information provided for scrutiny. Not enough detail was provided and it was not possible to work out what money was spent on under each area. At the recent Budget Scrutiny event, members had requested that information come forward for the Forum to scrutinise, to feed into the budget report going on to Council. Officers apologised that information had not been as fulsome as requested, in providing information behind the figures. It was acknowledged that in terms of Spalding Special Expenses, more work needed to be undertaken on this during 2018/19. There had been many changes, particularly as a result of the Place Review, and fundamental expenditure should be looked at.

A number of suggestions were put forward with regard to how the Forum should scrutinise/monitor the Spalding Special Expenses in the future:

- That consideration be given to Spalding Special Expenses on an annual basis, prior to their consideration by the full Council within the budget – this should be scheduled into the Forum's work programme;
- That with regard to the figures detailed within the report, the Forum should continue to pursue ascertaining further detail outside of the meeting;
- That more detail be added to Spalding Special Expenses reporting in the future;
- That a review be undertaken to look at spend;
- That information be brought to the Forum on a quarterly basis on monies actually spent, rather than looking at the figures in retrospect;
- That rather than dealing with officers, the Portfolio Holder for Finance be advised of any spend required – money was available within reserves, and requests could be submitted if any spend was required.

The Forum was reminded of its mandate – the Spalding Town Forum had been set up at the behest of the Cabinet, to scrutinise the Spalding Special Expenses, and to report back to the Cabinet.

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Because of the way it was structured, the Spalding Town Forum was limited in the way it could use the budget. Liaison with the Portfolio Holder for Finance was a sensible way forward.

In addition, there was a lot more detail behind each line of the budget information provided – it would be helpful to question the detail to provide greater understanding.

The Forum agreed that by undertaking the review of spend, and implementing the changes to the monitoring and scrutiny of the Spalding Special Expenses, the whole process would become more transparent.

AGREED:

- a) That the report be noted;
- b) That the Chairman's Special Events budget remain available to the Chairman, and that there be more awareness of its existence and use by members of the Spalding Town Forum and officers; and
- c) That scrutiny/monitoring of the Spalding Special Expenses by the Spalding Town Forum, in conjunction with officers and the Portfolio Holder Finance, be undertaken in the future through implementation of the following:
 - i. That Spalding Special Expenses be scrutinised on an annual basis, prior to their consideration by the full Council within the budget, and that this should be scheduled into the Forum's work programme;
 - ii. That with regard to the figures detailed within the report, the Forum should continue to pursue ascertaining further detail outside of the meeting;
 - iii. That more detail be added to Spalding Special Expenses reporting in the future;
 - iv. That a review be undertaken to look at spend;
 - v. That information be brought to the Forum on a quarterly basis on monies actually spent, rather than looking at the figures in retrospect;
 - vi. That rather than dealing with officers, the Portfolio Holder for Finance be advised of any spend required – money was available within reserves, and requests could be submitted if any spend was required.

JCrosby, R
Fleming

JCrosby,
R Fleming,
CMorgan,
G
Watkinson

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29. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

There were no items.

(The meeting ended at 7.11 pm)

(End of minutes)