

**MINUTES OF NOLTON AND ROCH COMMUNITY COUNCIL**  
**EXTRAORDINARY MEETING**  
**HELD AT VICTORIA HALL, ROCH**

**8 January 2018**

**Members Present**

D. Smith (Chair), J. Gale, M. Canton, J. Hancock, R. Thomson, M. Harries, Cllr. J. Adams

Clerk - A. Jones

1341 Apologies

A. Ricketts, A. Peach

1342 Declaration of interest

None.

1343 Precept discussion

D. Smith gave an overview of the issues at hand following the letter received from PCC Finance Director, Jon Haswell dated 12 December 2018 informing NRCC that:

1. Town / Community Councils are to fund the cost of their elections going forward; and
2. Community Councils must also consider the potential loss in provision of local services due to reduced PCC funding.

**Election costs**

The cost of an election is currently estimated at just under £6k. The next election is potentially 4 years away. If there is no election the cost is approximately £250. D. Smith approached 4 neighbouring Community Councils regarding this issue and heard back from 3. All agreed that they would need to make appropriate arrangements to cover these costs if they did not have the money in reserve. D. Smith suggested that any election cost should be proportionate to reflect the size of the community, and £6k seemed rather steep for a small Community Council; the neighbouring Community Councils were all in agreement re proportionality and would also respond emphasising this concern. All Councillors fully supported the proportionality argument.

R. Thomson also raised a question concerning second home owners: shouldn't the 150% council tax charge also be applicable to the precept charged as it is the local community who are suffering the direct consequence of the lack of available homes?

The Clerk reported back on her conversation with One Voice Wales who confirmed that Pembrokeshire are the last Welsh county to fund elections: therefore holding reserves and budgeting for an election has been a fact for every Community Council in Wales for many years and, like it or not, something we must now take on.

There were a number of options considered - perhaps make a small increase year on year, raise a lot in the last year (e.g. double the precept if needed), raise by 20% (an additional £1000 (approx.) each year), or make only a small increase with inflation as agreed previously (3%).

In order to assist with a decision, D. Smith presented some detailed statistical analysis re the effect of any increase and a table detailing the precepts over the last 2 years and cost per average Band D household of all Community Council's in Pembrokeshire. The average resident of Nolton and Roch pays £11.07 per year. The cost of precepts varied across the county, with the highest of £58 in Solva and Tenby. The Havens currently pay £33.01 a year. If we were to have an election costing £6k, NRCC would need to save £1.5k in reserves each year over the next 4 years. The Clerk reported that we currently have £407 in reserves and a balance of £2403 in the current treasurers account. A 20% increase for the next financial year would increase the precept from £5700 to £6840 providing an extra £1140 a year. It was clear from the analysis that the cost per household would be very small even for a relatively large increase of 20% to the overall precept (approximately £2 per household per year) which was a pleasant surprise to a number of the Councillors.

It was agreed by all, that obviously if there was no requirement for an election it would be beneficial to have the money in reserve to spend on community projects which have been on the proverbial back burner for some time due to finances e.g. speed signs.

J. Gale was against any increase above inflation, however small, preferring to make savings by reducing any larger donations next year, perhaps all together, and keeping this money in reserve.

M. Harries also agreed that NRCC should be more careful next year with their donations, particularly with donations where, although of community benefit, the donee is in a sound financial position. However, he also believed that these savings should be considered alongside an increase in the precept, given that the cost per household was so small, this money can then be used to budget for an election and fund the community projects we have planned. J. Hancock also echoed this sentiment. He noted that the Council has heard for a long time, at least 6 years, that the community want speed signs; wouldn't it be great if NRCC could achieve this sooner rather than later, and for just £2 a year, he felt that the community would be grateful for it. He concluded that sometimes small increases are agreeable if the community see the funds are used to directly benefit the parish of Nolton and Roch. It was also noted that the Visioning Workshop Action Plan for the parish, due to be carried out in April, was a timely occurrence and would hopefully give the community a firm focus and a number of projects to consider.

### **Local services**

The local services which Community Councils may be expected to fund were also discussed. Cllr. J. Adams thought it likely that grass cutting and toilets would be the likely devolved services, with street lights / highways more unlikely. M. Harries thought it likely that the cost to service one toilet was approximately £5k per year. There are 4 toilets in the parish (3 on Newgale and 1 on Nolton) which would equate to some £20k a year; it was agreed by all that this would be a very disproportionate responsibility for one Community Council given the fact that these toilets are used by a huge number of people and visitors who live outside of the local area: PCC and PCNPA must also take responsibility for these services.

However, as we have not been sent any other detail on this issue, the Councillors all agreed that it would be helpful for PCC to convene an open meeting with representatives of all rural Community Councils to explore exactly what additional local services PCC are seeking to pass on as we have not received any further information to date clarifying this issue. D. Smith also discussed this concern with three neighbouring Community Councils who were all fully in support of holding such a meeting.

- Action: Clerk to draft a letter to J. Haswell in response asking: 1) that the cost of any election should be proportionate to the size of the community; 2) for PCC to convene a meeting with representatives of all rural Community Councils to explore exactly what additional local services PCC are seeking to pass on; and 3) shouldn't the 150% council tax increase for second home owners also be applicable to the precept charged?

1344 Precept decision

M. Harries proposed a 20% increase. Seconded by M. Canton.

J. Gale against; R. Thomson and J. Hancock for.

It was therefore resolved that the precept be increased by 20%.

Reasoning: cost of elections anticipated at approximately £6k and NRCC may have to take on additional local services, however if the cost is less than anticipated or no election required, the money will be invested back into the community. The actual increase per average household is very small (£2 a year).

- Action: Clerk to fill in the precept request form requesting £6840 for 2018/19.

Meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Next meeting: 7.30pm on 5 February 2018 at Victoria Hall, Roch

Signed

Chairman