



**b) Leases** – The Clerk provided a written report on her recent meeting with Mr Heywood (Spire Solicitors) regarding all the Council leases and this was discussed. The Clerk was requested to check the insurance schedule to see if the Gaymers building was listed and also to clarify with Mr Heywood who has ownership of this building

**c) Draft budget and precept request for 2016/17** – The Clerk presented the draft budget and advised that figures were set with a 2% increase except where costs were clarified otherwise. The Clerk reiterated her previous comments that the budget had not been aligned to the precept request in previous years and that this was of concern and that there may be a need to address this which would result in a significant increase to the precept request. The Clerk advised that whilst the Council had good reserves there could potentially be precept capping in future years and also confirmed that the support grant was being reduced and eventually phased out and asked for members' consideration.

The Clerk reported on the budget sheet and highlighted significant costs and there was a very lengthy discussion, particularly relating to a forward budget for the Neighbourhood Plan. Members raised concerns regarding the potential cost of the plan and felt a further meeting was required on this specific item; the Clerk to arrange with Cllr Perkins, Cllr Burton, Cllr Bond and Mr Middleton.

The Clerk presented an additional confidential sheet with projected staff salaries and confirmed these had been discussed at length with both the Mayor and Cllr Crouch (Chairman of the Personnel Committee) and asked for approval of the recommendations.

On the motion of Cllr Ellis, seconded by Cllr Crouch, it was

**RESOLVED** to accept and approve the staff salary budget as presented

Members wished to reiterate to all other councillors that the Clerk was the Responsible Finance Officer for the Council and in control of the Council's finances and this included funds for the Neighbourhood Plan project

**ACTION: CLERK/ALL CLLRS**

The meeting closed at 9.20pm

**Public Participation Notes**

The Chairman invited members of the public to speak and comments received included the following –

- Mr Crook confirmed that he currently held the bar franchise at the Town Hall and advised members of his takings and emphasised that the bar was not economically viable under the current contract
- On some occasions the gross takings were as low as £30 for a wake
- He had his own costs to cover such as stock, staff wages and insurance cover
- Mr Crook had refurbished the bar and made improvements out of his own funds when he took this on
- He offered different options for consideration on how the Council could achieve an amicable compromise
- Restrictions on party decorations and access to the hall for hirers needed to be reviewed
- He suggested that the venue could be advertised to improve usage which would be beneficial for the Council and for the bar
- Mr Crook assured the members that in spite of the concerns raised he would like to continue and improve the bar and asked for consideration of his suggestions