

Wisborough Green Parish Council

Minutes of the Finance Committee

Date: Monday 13th November 2017

Present: Mr K Charman (KC), Mr P Drummond (Parish Council Chairman), Mr H True (HT)

Apologies: Mr A Jackson (AJ) Finance Chairman, Mr M Newell (MN)

In Attendance: Mrs L Davies, Clerk

Held in: The Committee Room, Village Hall

Members of Public: None

In the absence of the Committee Chairman, it was agreed that Mr Drummond would chair the meeting. The Chairman opened the meeting at 8.00 pm.

1. Apologies for Absence: Apologies were received and accepted from Mr Jackson and Mr Newell.
2. Declaration of Members' Interests: No interests were declared.
3. Minutes of the Last Meeting: The minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 11th April 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
4. Public Participation: There were no members of public present.
5. Budget Planning and Precept Setting Workshop: The Clerk attended the course on Thursday 9th November; the presentation and supporting papers had been circulated to the Finance Committee for information. Attendance confirmed that the Parish Council was following the correct procedure, but the following to be implemented:
 - Although the Parish Council had established a 5-year objectives plan, this should include ballpark figures to inform a 3 year budget forecast; the Clerk had started to prepare.
 - Need to identify items included in each budget heading and clearly note assumptions for continuity of the budgeting process and to aid staff changes.
 - Budget should be balanced. Surplus funds to be placed into the General Reserve (it was advised that this reserve should be 3-6 months of the Precept to cover unexpected expenditure) and a deficit budget was balanced by using the General Reserve or increasing the Precept.
 - Surplus funds at the year-end are placed into the General Reserve – funds are not carried over to the next year.
 - Consider adopting an Investment Policy – model available on the SSALC website.
6. Progress Review – 2017/18 Objectives and Budget Position: The 5-year objectives plan, prepared last November, was displayed. The document was reviewed in detail and updated to demonstrate progress. To be circulated to all Parish Council members for information and **approval** at the next meeting.

A report detailing the budget, expenditure to date and estimated year-end position for all budget headings was circulated in advance of the meeting and displayed. Each budget heading was considered and explanation given for anticipated year-end figures. The following was noted:

- The increased staff costs were due to a miss calculation when budget setting.
- It was **proposed** that the Village Hall reserve should be used to cover any further legal fees in relation to the new lease as this expenditure related specifically to the Hall. The full budget figure had been included for the anticipated year end figure.
- The Clerk was making enquiries into the high allotment water cost but advised that this cost would have to be met by the Council as 12 months' notice for any increase in allotment charges was required. With the online mapping system, a square metre charge could be introduced with effect from April 2019, giving a fairer rent as the allotments varied in size. She would report back following initial discussions with the Allotment Supervisor.

- The increase in General Maintenance was due to recent Council approval of maintenance work that had become apparent, one being CDC notification of bin condition.
- In relation to Other Projects, this related to Village Maintenance in the Conservation Area identified in the 5-year Objectives Plan. It was **proposed** that the fund should be used to finance the parking stoppers outside the Three Crowns. In view of the Village Hall refurbishment, it was agreed that any parking improvement around the building should not be undertaken until more details of the project phasing was known. In view of the over spend on the Clerk's Salary and tree work, it was **proposed** that the Conservation Area improvements be undertaken next year, in particular, widening of footpaths to potentially improve the walking to school route.
- It was **proposed** that the £2000 budget figure for paths and roads be transferred to the reserve fund. If not used to fund the layby project, a provision was being made for paths in the Conservation Area.

The year-end reserve balances and anticipated bank balances were reviewed. Members were happy that the current forecast would be in line with the budget, noting that any end of year surplus would go into the General Reserve. Explanation to the reserve funds was given; the Clerk highlighted that the Playground Reserve had now been depleted and that future loan repayments would be included in the budget. The Youth Club and Watershed Reserves were restricted for these purposes only, but the Layby Reserve could be used for other projects if WSCC agreed to fund the layby as part of the Community Scheme application, or be transferred to the General Reserve.

7. Budget Setting – 2018/19 Objectives and Draft Budget: Each budget heading was reviewed and explanation of anticipated income and expenditure given by the Clerk, which included provision for the 2018/19 objectives as identified earlier in the meeting.

Income: The following comments were noted:

- Allotments: The allotment rent was set for next year – some allowance made for break in tenancies.
- Annual Fair: Current year's figure – assume 2 days would be requested.
- Precept: Set at the current rate for budgeting purposes – to be confirmed by Full Council.
- Workhouse: At recent discussions, it was being proposed that a set percentage of 42% of Workhouse rent be included in the Lease which simplified the review process and linked payment to the Workhouse tenancy. Lease was still being prepared and would need approval by Full Council.

Expenditure: Explanation given by the Clerk for the included figures. The following was noted:

- Admin: Provision for licences, PO Box and website support – in line with previous years.
- Audit: In line with this year with 3% increase.
- Clerk's Salary: Provision made for increase in Nest payment to 5% from April 2018, possible 2% national increase for Clerk's salary and NI increase from April 2018
- Legal & Professional Fees: Complete process for new Scout Hut Lease.
- Allotment Maintenance: Hedge cutting – allowing for 2 cuts.
- Village Hall: Agreed no further contribution to reserve.
- Workhouse Loan Repayment: Rent payment for new Lease would cover – could use Village Hall reserve.
- CDC Litter Collection: Dog & Litter bins only – 3% increase applied.
- General Maintenance – in line with previous years (extra items undertaken this year)
- Grass Cutting: A quotation for next year had been requested. 3% increase on this year included for budgeting purposes.
- Green Maintenance and Litter Warden: In line with this year.
- Path Maintenance: £500 for minor repairs.
- Pond: Possible that Lily removal would be required – larger sum included under Pond Projects.
- Public Toilets: The cleaning contractor advised that the charge would not increase next year – small increase for supplies applied.
- Other Projects – proposed to include allowance for Workhouse shed (based on 1 quotation), Telephone Kiosk restoration (grant funding also required), There But Not There installation
- Playground Projects: Loan repayment. No other major projects planned.

Balance: Currently showing as a deficit budget. Full Council would need to agree if this was balanced from reserves (possible Village Hall for loan repayment) or the Precept increased.

Proposal: That the budget, as tabled and adjusted above, should be presented to the Parish Council next week for further consideration. To confirm 2018/19 objectives and if any other projects are to be included. Precept to be confirmed at January meeting.

7. Date of Next Meeting: Full Parish Council Meeting on Tuesday 21st November 2017. Finance Committee meeting to be arranged in 2018 – date to be confirmed.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.15 pm.

Signed by the Chairman: Date: