

Wisborough Green Parish Council

Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting

Date: Tuesday 12th November 2019
Present: Mr P Drummond (PD), Mr M Newell (MN) Finance Chairman,
Mr H True (HT), Martin Watson (MW)
Apologies: Mr A Jackson (AJ)
In Attendance: Mrs L Davies, Clerk
Held in: The Village Hall
Members of Public: None

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00 pm.

1. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received and accepted from Mr Jackson.

2. Declaration of Members' Interests:

No interests were declared.

3. Public Participation:

There were no members of public present.

4. Progress Review – 2019/2020 Budget Position and Objectives:

The budget and projected year-end position had been circulated in advance of the meeting and was also displayed. The individual budget headings were discussed and the Clerk gave explanation to the items included. The following specific comments were noted:

INCOME

- From Reserves: It had originally been anticipated that £3,000 of reserves would be required to balance the budget; this was now unnecessary due to the adjustments. Explanation was given to the Watershed Reserve Fund and it was agreed that the drainage work in the Village Hall car park was a legitimate use of this fund. This fund could also be used for any work in Kirdford Road. The anticipated use of reserves was therefore reduced on the budget.
- Grants: Not budgeted. Noted that any unspent Neighbourhood Plan grant would need to be paid back, but less likely due to the recent grant variation for consultancy help.
- Public Toilets: Toilet donations/advertising were decreasing; income was unlikely to exceed the stated £1,335.00.
- Sundry Income: Higher than anticipated due to the in/out costs associated with the CLT grant and replacement noticeboard.
- Village Hall Lease: The Workhouse rent had been increased slightly in August 2019 which was reflected in the year-end position. Due to the anticipated works, no increases would be expected for the next few years.

EXPENDITURE

Administration

- Admin Miscellaneous: The Parish Council had agreed in April 2019 to vire the £3,000 election fee to cover unanticipated expenditure in the year. £814.52 had been spent to date and the balance would be used for the Clerk's new laptop due to the difficulties being experienced. The new accounts package to be included in next year's budget.
- Insurance: The Clerk had arranged insurance for the telephone box and 'Tommy' silhouette but the small increase would not be applied until October 2020.
- Legal & Professional Fees: Higher than budget due to the Pavilion Lease. The in/out cost for the CLT formation was noted.
- Publicity: Allowed for 5 circulations in the year, but only 4 likely; budget reduced accordingly. Neighbourhood Plan publicity was covered by the grant.

- Subscriptions: Slightly over as APCAG subscription not included in budget.
- Telephone: The current contract with BT finished at the end of November. It was agreed that it should just roll over as the Clerk would be moving house early next year. The current contract would be reviewed. New connection charges would also be incurred but costs currently unknown.
- All Other Administration Headings: Budget figure used for year-end position, but some small savings anticipated.

Allotments

- Allotment Maintenance: Although the expenditure to date was £380, the full budget figure had been included as the Clerk was aware that the allotment holders would be making a proposal to the Parish Council to fund a water capturing initiative.
- Allotment Water: The meter was now read on a monthly basis and had just been turned off for the winter. A bill had recently been received and water use was in line with last year – just 4 litres more! Small amount used since last meter reading. Will be within budget.

Village Hall & Workhouse

- Workhouse Loan Repayment: Higher than budget due to an error in repayments being identified by the Public Works Loan Board. This had been corrected in the one-off adjustment so the anticipated payment schedule would resume. MN/PD had been forwarded the correspondence. The last payment was November 2023.

Village Maintenance

- CDC Litter Collection: Noted that the annual invoice was received in March when costs would be known.
- Christmas Tree: The Parish Council/PCC had agreed to the projection. PD asked the Clerk to look into the cost of hiring a waterproof projector to make the installation easier. **Action: Clerk**
- General Maintenance: Outstanding maintenance items were noted. Unbudgeted tree work had been included to reflect a more realistic annual budget. It was agreed that future budget allocation should be increased.
- Green Maintenance: Purely related to works to the grass surface as advised by Cllr Burbridge. The overspend was noted, which had been approved by Council earlier in the year. Thought to be given to future budget provision and specification for Parish Council responsibility.
- Path Maintenance: Repairs currently being undertaken as identified in the risk assessment, therefore over budget; authorised by Council.
- Public Toilets: Over budget due to the deep clean and increase in supplies over the year.
- Winter Management Plan: Only required for severe weather.

Village Projects

- Other Projects: The Clerk still hoped to progress the toilet hot water by the year-end and would also make a grant application.
- Neighbourhood Plan: Use of grant and budgeted £500 noted.
- Playground: Further enquiries this year indicated that the new surfacing would cost about £17,000 rather than the original estimate of about £6,000 included in budget. Project to be deferred to next year. The anticipated expenditure therefore related to some remedial repairs identified in the recent inspection.
- Pond Project: Trying to arrange a pond inspection. This expenditure was unlikely before the year-end but included in the year-end projection; a saving likely.
- Unbudgeted Expenditure: Items noted.

The year-end reserve balances and anticipated bank balance was reviewed. Members were happy that the current forecast would not reduce the reserves for the following year. The 5-year objectives plan, prepared in November 2016, and updated in 2019, was displayed. Progress was reviewed and consideration given to 2020/2021 projects which would influence budget discussion. It was agreed that the Playground Surfacing, at an estimated cost of £17,000 should be **proposed to full Council** as a major project for completion in 2020/21. The objectives plan to be updated and circulated to all for approval.

It was noted that the first of the Community Infrastructure Funding was likely to be received in 2020/21 which would allow some of the projects to be progressed without the use of Parish Council funds/Precept.

5. Budget Setting – Draft Budget

Each budget heading was reviewed and explanation of anticipated income and expenditure given by the Clerk. It was agreed that the Clerk should provide commentary to identify projects that used the reserves in the comments section in order to retain the spreadsheet on two pages.

INCOME: The following was discussed and agreed:

- Annual Fair: Assume 2 days would be requested. Agreed that there should be a small increase, therefore an additional £10, £5 for each day.
- Village Hall Lease: Increase noted.

EXPENDITURE: The following was discussed and agreed:

- Admin Miscellaneous: In line with previous years but inclusion of £800 for new accounting software and £1000 for website accessibility work.
- Audit: In line with this year with small increase.
- Clerk's Salary: Provision made for increases from April 2020 for NI, NEST and salary increase; to be approved by full Council.
- Councillor Expenses: £500 provision to cover mileage and parking to attending meetings (if requested).
- Legal & Professional Fees: Complete process for new Scout Hut Lease and £1,000 allocation for Pavilion Heads of Terms.
- General Maintenance: Increased to allow for on-going annual maintenance schedule.
- Green Maintenance: Increased to reflect current year expenditure. Schedule of Parish Council works to be agreed.
- Litter Warden: Monitoring difficulties and benefits of contractor discussed. Could consider suspending to monitor impact.
- Playground Projects: Loan repayment, and wetpour surfacing for seesaw and swing (£17,000).

Balance: Currently showing a deficit budget with 2019/20 Precept (£61,500). CDC would not confirm the Tax Base until December, which would impact upon the Council Tax calculations. The Finance Committee therefore proposed that the Lay-by Reserve be used towards the Playground Project and that consideration be given to increasing the Precept when the Tax Base was confirmed.

Proposal: That the budget, as tabled and adjusted above, should be presented to the Parish Council on 19th November 2019 for further consideration. To confirm 2020/21 objectives and if any other projects are included. Precept to be confirmed at January 2020 meeting.

6. Bank Accounts:

The Parish Council currently used the new Barclays Community Account for day-to-day banking but had retained the existing Natwest Deposit and Current Accounts. In view of future CIL receipts, and FCSC protection, the Clerk was anxious to spread the risk and to earn interest on Parish Council funds. Details of accounts used by other Parish Councils were presented. Members proposed that in the interim, a Barclays instant access deposit account be opened to allow flexibility between the current and deposit account and that the Finance Committee give further thought to other options at the next meeting.

Proposal: To open a Barclays Instant Access Deposit Account.

7. Allotment Rents:

In view of the previously high water bill, tenants had been advised that a rent review would be undertaken which would be based on plot size (square meterage); the rent for 2020/21 had already been set. Members agreed that notice should be given that the new charge would be implemented from April 2021 and the Clerk to undertake measurements to determine the charge.

Proposal: Rents for 2020/21 remain as previously indicated to tenants in February 2018. Rents to be based on measured plot size from April 2021 which would be equitable for tenants – an increase was anticipated for most.

8. Date of Next Meeting:

Full Parish Council Meeting on Tuesday 19th November 2019. Finance Committee meeting to be arranged after the year-end in early April 2020 – date to be confirmed.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.50 pm.