



Date: Tuesday 7th November 2023

Present: Mr P Drummond (Finance Chairman), Mr H True, Mr M Watson

Apologies: Mr A Jackson

In attendance: Mrs L Davies, Parish Council Clerk

Members of Public: None

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.30 pm.

1. Apologies for Absence:
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. Management & Financial Risk Assessment:
The 2022 assessment had been circulated in advance of the meeting; the risks were reviewed. The assessed risks were not changed but the following wording was changed:
 16. Cyber Insurance held. This was removed as it was not offered as part of the new policy.
 22. Added - A 3-year long term agreement was taken out with the new provider in October 2022.
 25. Removed - No credit or debit cards are in place. Added - The Clerk holds a Parish Council Debit Card for authorised online purchases only.
 26. Added - Other Councillors have been added to an alternative current account to ensure that Parish Council funds are always accessible for emergency payments in the absence of the main everyday bank account signatories.
 32. Added - Obtain and review the Village Hall Insurance Policy on an annual basis to ensure that it is in place and provides sufficient cover. Ensure that the insured rebuild cost is sufficient.

No further changes were proposed; the document remained current.

In terms of cyber security, the Clerk had raised this at a recent Clerks' meeting and enquired if other Parish Councils insured against this risk. She was advised to speak to Maureen Chaffe of Process Matters which many councils engaged for data protection support. Ms Chaffe had advised that the risk to the Parish Council was low, and that the insurance premium would be better spent having a review of current procedures, councillor training and engaging her to assist with data protection by acting as the Data Protection Officer. Ms Chaffe also offered advice and support with Freedom of Information requests. There was an annual fee of £150 plus £10 per head for councillor training on Zoom. This was in comparison to a £370 annual insurance premium.

Proposal to Full Council:

- **That the Management & Financial Risk Assessment be adopted as tabled.**
- **Ms Chaffe of Process Matters to be engaged to review the Council’s data protection procedures and Councillors agree to undertake a one-hour training session.**

5. Objectives:

The 5-year Plan up to 2028 was circulated in advance of the meeting and reviewed. It was a working document and new objectives could be added when identified.

Proposed changes:

In addition to the highlighted amendments/notes as tabled:

ROAD AND TRANSPORT

Remove – Durbans Road Buildout – not supported by WSCC and Songhurst Meadow development now completed.

Remove Butts Meadow Garage use/additional parking - this had been explored and garages are either privately owned or owned by Hyde Housing. Unlikely to be achieved.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Public Toilets – CDC recently advised that it wished to gift the facilities to the Parish Council. Discussion item by Full Council on 21st November. Future CIL and grant funding available to upgrade.

Remove – Youth Provision – project completed.

Add – Playground – upgrade/replacement of large climbing frame – costs being obtained.

VILLAGE MAINTENANCE

Look to include drainage clearance every few years and make budget and/or CIL provision for the Kirdford Road pavement/Village Hall car park resurfacing. Clerk to obtain updated prices.

COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Welcome to new residents – suggestion of printed welcome card with link to website and new residents’ page.

Promotion of Community Organisations – should this be removed?

Proposal to Full Council: That the Objectives Plan for up to 2028 be reviewed by Full Council and proposed amendments made. Other projects to be added if considered desirable.

7.59 pm – The Chairman adjourned the meeting in order that the Planning Committee meeting could start at 8.00 pm. The meeting resumed at 8.15 pm.

6. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

The CIL and S106 expenditure allocation, as agreed in January 2021, was reviewed. The expenditure to date and balances were noted. The Clerk highlighted that the use of CIL funding was restricted and that the current funding was time limited (use by 31 March 2025) although Chichester District Council (CDC) had advised that there was some flexibility for longer term projects, such as the Pavilion. The available funds and proposed use are summarised below:

Songhurst Meadow CIL		
Scheme	Proposed Project	Available Funds
Traffic Calming	Durbans Road Speed Reduction 2024/2025	£935.03
Traffic Calming	Newpound Lane Hedge Realignment 2024/2025	£3,000.00
Storage Garage	The allocation was £20,000. As agreed, £9,000 had been vired to the Songhurst Meadow track and £10,000 to	£1,000.00

	the Youth Project	
Pavilion	Improvements or rebuild of sports pavilion to create community sports facility £6,963 of the £24,000 allocation spent on planning/consultants fees for the new pavilion	£17,037.00
Remaining Funds for CIL projects		£21,972.03

Great Meadow Section 106 Funding (held by CDC)		
Scheme	Proposed Project	Available Funds
Art Fund	Village Hall - The Management Committee was pursuing an idea to replace the entrance doors with etched glazing; the project had been approved by CDC. The funds would be released to the Village Hall on application with supporting documents (3 quotes).	£9,447.41 plus interest
Community Facilities	Pavilion - It was agreed that this money should be used and not returned to the developer. As the new Pavilion project might exceed the time deadline, to potentially consider improvements to the existing building.	£21,547.85 plus interest
Remaining Funds for these projects only		£30,995.26 plus interest

Songhurst Meadow Section 106 Funding (£55,000 received by the Parish Council)		
Scheme	Proposed Project	Available Funds
Legal Fees	Expenditure - £1,500 transferred into budget	-
Open Space	Expenditure - £5,818.36 transferred into budget for the path and bridge	-
Balance Invested but available for future SM projects if agreed		£47,681.64

Proposal to Full Council: To alert Wisborough Green Sports to the availability of the Great Meadow Section 106 Funding and support expenditure on the existing Pavilion if the expiration time prevented release for the new pavilion.

7. 2023/2024 Budget:

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 and anticipated income and expenditure for the remainder of the year. In some instances, the full budget had been included but small savings were anticipated. The current projection showed a small end of year surplus. However, the Clerk highlighted that quotes were being obtained for the necessary playground repairs which could remove this surplus although the Playground Reserve of £3,877 could also be bought into budget. The anticipated year-end reserves were reviewed.

Proposal to Full Council:

- **Election Fee:** As an election was not held, to transfer the election budget of £3,750 to create an Election Reserve (an election could be called at anytime when a vacancy occurred).
- **Neighbourhood Plan:** As the grant funding had been exhausted and a plea, due to external factors, would need to be made for any further grant funding, to transfer the unspent budget of £2,250 to create a Neighbourhood Plan Reserve.
- **Watershed:** To bring into budget from this Reserve £750 for the ditch clearance.

- **After year-end, the final accounts to be reviewed and the appropriate Reserves used to balance the budget, if required. Any surplus to increase the General Reserve.**

8. 2023/2024 Budget:

A draft budget had been prepared and reviewed by the Clerk and Chairman. It was circulated in advance of the meeting and displayed. Additional information had been provided in the supporting Excel sheets which provided a breakdown for the budget figures where more detail of calculation was required. Budget figures had been included in line with the current year and percentage increases applied at this stage, but the Clerk would obtain fixed quotations for the toilet cleaning and potential projects. Provision had been included for taking on the public conveniences. The one outstanding figure related to the building insurance; CDC was providing a building valuation. The Clerk highlighted the Clerk's Salary award from April 2023; members felt that this should be increased further to reflect inflation for next year. The Clerk to ascertain from CDC if resurfacing the Kirdford Road pavement would qualify for CIL funding.

PD highlighted that at a recent West Sussex Association of Local Councils (WSALC) Chair's briefing, Trevor Leggo (WSALC) reminded the attendees that any increase in the general council tax charged by local authorities (CDC and WSCC) was capped at just under 3%. A referendum was required for increases above this figure, but this constraint did not apply to parishes. Local authority budgets were under pressure and, consequently, the provision of non-statutory items was being reduced. Without the constraint on increases to the precept the Parish Council had the opportunity to take a formal decision to undertake maintenance items that were no longer being undertaken by CDC/WSCC, such as the public toilets and gully weed spraying. Whilst this would increase local costs the benefits would be wholly localised and have a positive impact upon the village and its appearance. The precept calculator, with last year's tax base figure, was reviewed which demonstrated that a 10% increase would be a weekly increase of 16p for a Band D property. If the Parish Council made the decision to take on extra responsibilities, it would need to be clearly communicated with explanation to how the cost was spread and what would be achieved, possibly in the Parish magazine, prior to CDC distributing Council Tax statements.

Proposal to Full Council:

- **That the budget, as tabled and adjusted above, should be presented to the Parish Council on 21st November 2023 for further consideration.**
- **To confirm 2024/25 objectives, and if any other projects are to be considered, for confirmation at the January meeting. Precept to be confirmed at the January 2024 meeting.**
- **To include in the budget provision to undertake further maintenance such as gully spraying/road sign cleaning/etc.**

9. Bank and Investment Accounts:

The bank account balances were reviewed, and consideration given to monthly expenditure, expenditure for the rest of this financial year and possible further investments. It had been the intention to open the 1-year bonds on a quarterly basis, but unfortunately delays in processing the account opening had affected the interval period, with 3 opened in the year. Although there was perhaps an opportunity to increase the current investments, there was also a need to have access to funds in case of an emergency.

Account	Current Interest Rate AER	Balance as at 17th October 2023
Barclays Community Account (Everyday Account)	-	11,042.69
Barclays Deposit Account	1.41%	34,416.99
Natwest Current Account (Back-up Everyday Account)	-	1,086.50

Natwest Capital Reserve Account	1.46%	23,758.69
Cambridge & Counties 1 Yr Term (1) Opened January 2023	3.30%	30,000.00
Cambridge & Counties 1 Yr Term (2) Opened May 2023	4.00%	30,000.00
Redwood Bank 1 Yr Term (1) Opened October 2023	4.00%	30,000.00
Total Funds		£160,304.87

Proposal to Full Council:

- **To approve reinvestment of the current 1-year term bonds as they mature, noting that the interest rate will potentially improve.**
- **Interest received to be bought into budget rather than increasing capital investment.**
- **Review cash flow and the 1-year bond reinvestment process over the coming year with a view to increasing bond values as they matured from January 2025. To be considered by the Finance Committee in November 2024.**

10. Date of Next Meeting:

Full Parish Council Meeting on Tuesday 21st November 2023.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.30 pm.

Signed by the Chairman: Date: