

## **Notes of Finance Meeting**

**Held on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2023 at 81 High Street**

**Present:** Cllr Bell, Cllr Baker, Cllr Rimmington. T Miles (Clerk)

This meeting was to primarily review the final budget proposals and the impact on the precept for presentation to Full Council and to agree a recommendation to transfer reserves to a savings account.

Cllr Rimmington has raised a concern that there has been a large increase in exemptions paying Council Tax. Cllr Bell confirmed that he had raised the issue with BCllr Dave Davis as we do not know why there is such an increase. As a Parish Council, it is felt that this information is required in order to plan for the future. i.e. if the 25% reduction is included, this could indicate more single households. An increase of those receiving benefits, particularly social housing could indicate more people needing support and use of public services etc. It was agreed that the special project budget initially set aside for transport should include 'cost of living crisis projects'

### **Budget/Precept discussions**

Cllr Bell noted that we have agreed an amount for the devolved urban cuts with KCC. However, we are still not sure about any payments coming forward for maintaining footpaths. Tina noted that KCC had cut back the path at the top of the Knowle and that the footpath by the river is still officially closed. So we have budgeted to receive only one payment from KCC for the Urban Cut. Any additional funds can be used to offset cost.

It was noted that there could be a potential water leak on the allotments. Cllr Bell has checked the taps, and whilst the Horses tap had a slow 'drip' it was caused by not being shut off tightly enough. Although he did not feel this would cause a large increase in usage. He will check to see if the meter is still turning whilst the taps are off.

It was agreed to reduce the grounds maintenance budget by 1k as there is also an amount allocated for the Urban Cut. It was recognised that the scheduled contract was not completed for 2022 which meant a reduction. However, a list will be produced for additional work required by the end of the financial year. An amount of 1k emergency H & S of trees will also be included in special projects which could be vied to the contractor if needed.

Cllr Rimmington noted that it is important for Councillors to do a walk-about to identify what is needed around the village to make it look more welcoming. i.e. flowering trees on the village green.

### **Special projects**

Benches. Cllr Rimmington noted that Trenport have indicated that they will replace the vandalised ones in PV. Also, if the playing fields in PV are to be charged, the Management Company should provide benches anyway. It was agreed that the budget was not for a specific area as replacements are needed in the old village too.

**Coronation event** – need to look at setting up a group to look at delivering an event.

**Lollypop lady** – It was noted that this may be the final year that Stella will undertake the role and it is unclear as to whether the school would support the service going forward. However, this may be something to take up with the new Head Teacher, when appointed.

**Handyman** – Cllr Rimmington noted that Burham had problems with recruiting. If this is also a problem for us, the money could be used for the grounds maintenance contractor to undertake specific works.

**Transport and cost of living support.** Application for funding to be done with Burham and Wouldham to get a minibus. Whilst the application needs to be submitted by February, if successful, we would still have the opportunity to refuse it. Cllr Rimmington noted that he felt that the PC should not be subsidising KCC for transport, particularly as all the advertising for PV shows sustainable transport links. He suggested a survey to be sent out to residents before any decisions are taken. Cost of living projects - this could include warm spaces etc.

Cllr Rimmington noted that there was previously budget for extra car parking spaces. Cllr Bell noted that only 1 quote had been received from the 3 invited, however it is only for £1235 (net) which would give an extra 8 spaces around the edge of the car park. Any resident parking bollards would need to be self-funding. Cllr Rimmington noted that resident parking only could cause problems and allocation needs to be carefully looked at. Resolution to implement the lining to be put forward to the PC meeting which may help reduce the problem anyway.

### **Saving Account**

Tina has researched potential savings banks and many seem to still have a very low interest rate for businesses/ clubs and societies etc. For example, the Nationwide 95-day account is 1.6%, Santander Treasurers Account is 0.2%, Shawbrook is 1% for a 100-day account. The best she should find with the required FSCS protection is the Redwood Bank which offers 2.25% on a 95-day account. It was agreed that financial controls should mean that any requirement for transfers should be known in good time to use such an account. It was agreed to put the Redwood bank forward to full council to look at transferring around 70k of funds to ensure compliance with the Annual Investment Strategy

Meeting closed at 8pm