

Minutes of Finance Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 30th November 2021 at 7.30 p.m. via Video Conferencing.

Present: Mary George (Chairman), Tricia Fuller, Laura Erith and Debbie Hattrell (Responsible Finance Officer).

1. Apologies for absence

All were present.

2. Precept Calculation

At the time of preparing the Precept Working Sheet, the final tax base figures were not available, however, Babergh District Council had provided predicted figures. The final version will not be available until early January, so all recommendations made as a result of this meeting were to be preliminary until the confirmed financial position is known. Members were minded to increase the Precept by 1.9% this year.

3. Capital Investment Fund Reserves

Village Hall Car Park	£5000
Village Hall Roof	£15600
Playground	£6000
Allotments	£0
Street Lights	£6000
Funds to be allocated	£0
Total	£32600

The Chairman agreed to update the Fixed Asset Register details for circulation to the Parish Council. It was noted we are around a decade from the start of the Street Light upgrade program and each lantern is expected to last around 25 years. Reserves need to be building in the Capital Investment Fund for future replacement. Similarly the Playground project completed around 5 years ago, so the same principle applies. A further £2000 to be reserved for the Capital Investment Fund from the 2022/23 year.

4. Grass Cutting and Litter Picking

Quotes had been obtained from our usual contractor and an alternative contractor for Grass cutting at £6500 (around £2000 more than our current contractors). Our current contractors therefore remain competitive and the figures have been incorporated in the spreadsheet for both Grass Cutting and Litter. The wide range of services provided by our existing contractors is very favourable. The Finance Committee recommends the contract be allocated again to the existing contractors for the 2022/23 year.

5. Clerks Salary

It was recommended to continue to adhere to the National Pay Rates for Clerks. So if an increase is agreed nationally, the Clerk's Salary will increase accordingly. The figures for next year have not been released and this year's is still under negotiation. Suitable estimates were incorporated based on the information so far.

6. Allotments & Burial fees

It was recommended to maintain the Allotment Rents at the same level and Burial Fees will have a small uplift to keep up with inflation. The Chairman will circulate the spreadsheet ahead of the meeting.

7. Webbs Meadow

The Finance Committee recommends that the Annual Contribution towards the grass cutting remains at £350.

8. Locality Budget/CIL and other Grants.

The Village Hall Roof project is now back on and reserves are building in the Capital Investment Fund to be voted on by full Parish Council in due course. The CIL receipts now amount to £15142 which can be allocated to new infrastructure, not mobile equipment. The Clerk made an enquiry with the District Council CIL department who confirmed our plans for the turning circle do qualify for our own CIL monies. £1000 of the CIL funds has already been allocated to new bins. The Finance Committee recommends the Parish Council authorise the turning circle works to be taken from the Parish CIL receipts. Grants will be sought towards the Caley Green improvements once the final specification of works is agreed. These will top up the grants already provided.

11. Review of the Financial Regulations, Standing Orders and Internal Control Policy

The Clerk had previously reviewed the Internal Control Policy to reflect the Video Conferencing procedures. We are operating under the most up to date versions of the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The Finance Committee recommend all three documents reflect our current needs, so these should be approved by full Council.

12. Street Lighting

The outstanding work that do not require additional permissions have been completed. The home owner where a light is attached to their property would need to seek Listed Building Permission to make changes. A modest reserve is incorporated into the spreadsheet for next year in case matters move forward in this respect.

13. Precept Principles

Subject to final tax base details from Babergh District Council, the Finance Committee recommend a slight increase of 1.9% (which, based on the figures currently available, gives a Precept of £41,758).

The Meeting closed at 8.43 p.m.

Summary of Recommendations for adoption at December/January Parish Council Meetings

1. A Precept of £41758 for 2022/23 year (subject to final tax base figures)
2. A further £2000 be allocated to the Capital Investment Fund from the 2022/23 year.
3. This Council continues to adhere to the National Scale for Clerks Salaries for 2022/23 year
4. This Council will award the Grass and Litter Contracts for 2022/23 year to our existing contractors.

5. The Contribution towards Webbs Meadow grass cutting to remain at £350
6. The Allotment Rent is to remain the same for next financial year
7. The Burial Fees will have a small uplift to allow for inflation in a similar way to previous years.
8. The current Internal Control Policy, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders have been reviewed and currently meet our needs.
9. The fixed asset document has been updated for approval
10. Parish CIL monies are to be used for the turning circle improvements which can now be authorised
11. The full resurfacing of the playground should go ahead as soon as possible.
12. Other recreation ground work and burial ground work has been quoted for and the expenditure has been incorporated into the spreadsheet subject to approval by full Parish Council at the December Meeting.