

MINUTES OF HORSMONDEN PARISH COUNCIL
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
MONDAY 11TH DECEMBER 2017
AT 7.30 PM,
ST MARGARETS CHURCH HALL.

Present: Cllr Russell (Chair)
Councillors, Davis, Richards and March.

In attendance: Lucy Noakes (Clerk)
No members of the public

Declarations of Interest: Declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct were invited. None were recorded.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

2. PRECEPT FOR 2018/2019 – Please see attached appendices: Precept Proposal 2018/19, Annual Expenditure Comparison and Estimated Reserves Summary.

The Clerk circulated a draft copy of the Proposed Precept for 2018/19 upon which she had estimated figures, together with a copy of the council's current working budget, and estimated expenditure and reserves.

The first item to be discussed was the clerk's salary. This was based on current situation of the clerk being paid at 31 points on the NALC salary scale, employed for 19 hours a week, however the Finance Committee considered the imminent pay settlement advice from NALC and added approximately 2% which is the expected negotiated rise for the sector, increasing the salary to £14500 per annum.

The Clerks bonus incentives as previously outlined in the December 2015 Finance meeting was discussed. Three of the four bonuses outlined in 2015 were still to be achieved and paid, however it was proposed by Cllr March that as the council had reached the end of Village Vision and it had now developed in to Neighbour hood planning, this project was finished and reviewed and that the bonus of £200 could now be paid to the clerk. The Clerk had spent some time researching this matter for the Council. This decision was seconded by Cllr Davis, unanimous. The remaining two bonuses were in respect of the Institute Lease and Review of the Play Area lease and the amounts in respect of these currently remained in General Reserves until these projects were finalised and they could be paid.

At the Personnel committee meeting on 21st November it had been recommended that as the clerk did not wish to take on more hours at present, the council should consider employing a deputy for up to ten hours a week. This was ratified by full council at their meeting on 4th December and therefore provision of £6300 was added to the precept which would cater for an employee paid up to point 26 of the NALC scale for up to 10 hours a week. It was envisaged that the Clerk should be responsible for the management of the deputy clerk and that relevant training should be provided for the clerk in the new year to prepare her for this new role.

National Insurance and pension provision were increased accordingly in respect of the new role to be created.

The training budget was increased slightly in expectation of taking on a new employee, plus the possibility of increased training for councillors if the Council decided to try and qualify for Quality Council.

The reserves held for the Village Hall improvements and maintenance were considered in some depth, as although a new boiler was required at some point and potential alterations to the rear of the hall, it was felt that sufficient reserves were held in place for these works at present. The situation might become clearer in future years when it was known whether a potential alternative site could be found for a purpose-built Village hall in the TWBC Call for Sites. It was felt that painting of the hall should now be combined with maintenance and improvements.

The council also held good reserves for the Institute Building, however it was felt that the imminent repairs to be carried out to the roof were not going to be a permanent solution and longer term a complete over haul of the roof would need to take place, which would be costly. It was therefore considered that an amount of £5000 should be added to the precept for this purpose.

The Committee considered that the Play area reserve should continue to be built upon for a potential replacement of the facilities by approximately 2022. It was hoped that some s106 monies would also become available for this purpose. An approximate estimation for refurbishment should be obtained in the next financial year if possible so that a clearer project could be put in place.

The cleaning of the Public conveniences would potentially increase in the next year if the council decided to continue with the pressure washing of the toilet floors. This amount was therefore increased to £3300.

It was considered that the street lighting maintenance contract currently in place may not be sufficient and the clerk had obtained some alternative quotations. Bearing this in mind the precept was increased slightly to £1800 for this item. The Council may need to consider replacement of some of the lights in future with more efficient LED style lighting and for this reason the budget for improvements was increased to £2000.

The Council had recently decided to discontinue the services of the street cruiser bus, however an amount of £1500 was still budgeted for Youth Provision as it was hoped that the council might be able to provide some entertainment in the school holidays in the form of a climbing wall or similar facility.

The budget for office equipment was increased to allow for the purchase of a new laptop for an additional member of staff and additionally the amount allowed for maintenance contract for computers was also increased slightly.

TWBC had arranged a service to assist parishes with Traveller Incursions and the cost of this service was £700 per annum for each parish, which was added to the precept.

Cllr Richards proposed that as the only remaining project from the Village Vision process was now the Traffic Solution Project, all reserves held for Village Vision should be re-allocated to this project. This was seconded by Cllr March, unanimous. The current Traffic Solutions

Project was now a priority of the council and the amount precepted towards the conclusion of the project was therefore £15000.

The Council had recently decided to commence a Neighbourhood Plan, and although it was hoped (but in no way certain) that the majority of the costs of hiring consultants to assist with the project would be covered by a grant from Locality over the current and following financial year, other costs - such as printing, room hire and additional costs incurred by the consultants - would not be covered by this amount. The council therefore budgeted an amount of £7000 towards this project.

Bearing this in mind, Cllr Richards proposed that the recommendation from the Finance Committee should be for an increase in precept to £90,000 for the financial year 2018/19, given the extra expenditure on Traffic Solutions and Neighbourhood Planning. This was seconded by Cllr Davis and voted for unanimously.

The Committee then looked at the Reserves schedule provide by the clerk.

It was suggested that the heading 'Village Green Posts' be amended to Village Green Furniture' so that it could incorporate posts, benches and any other paraphernalia on the Green and at Fromandez Drive. It was also suggested that as the posts around Fromandez Drive were in a poor condition, the council should consider spending the reserve to preplace the wooden posts with recycled plastic similar to those around the green, within the current financial year if possible.

It was also proposed by Cllr Davis and seconded by Cllr March that 'Office/Computer equipment' reserves should be transferred to 'General Reserves' as such a small amount was held. Unanimous.

It was considered that a replacement string of lights should be purchased for the village green prior to the Summer Festival, as there was a healthy reserve available for this.

3. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Discussion only)

There being no further matters to discuss the meeting ended at 9.30pm.