

MINUTES of a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

held on Tuesday 3rd January 2023 at 6:30pm in Scholes Pavilion.

PRESENT: Councillors Kinga Ragg (Chair)
Claire Hassell Graham Slater Stella Walsh

In attendance: The Clerk.

1 APOLOGIES. Cllr. Remmer.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST. None.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS.

It was **resolved** that the minutes of the Committee meetings (5/2022) held on 4th October 2022 (74-76) and (6/2022) held on 11th November 2022 (77-78) having been circulated, be approved, all in favour.

4. BUDGET 2023/24

The Chair had circulated a budget for discussion. She had proposed some changes to reduce expenditure and invited comment on the proposed reductions.

It was noted that the Parish Council (PC) adopted Reserves Policy stated that the level of general reserves to ultimately be held by the PC should be a minimum level of six months operational costs of the nett revenue expenditure and the proposed budget needed amendment to achieve this. It was also noted that for many years, there had been no increase in precept and it was suggested that in future, there be an annual increase.

There was discussion as follows:

- Verity Strip. Initial discussions about the budget had suggested a budget of £7,200 for this. This was reduced to £5,000. An on-site meeting with Barwick Cricket Club early in 2022 seemed to suggest they would pay for this in return for a grant from the PC for 50% of the cost but they had since stated that they felt that the percentages were out of tune. An updated quotation was awaited.
- The training budget was reduced from £1,000 to £600 noting that 2023 was an election year which may result in new Councillors.
- The garage was costing £550 a year. It was suggested that a shed be purchased out of the remaining Vision Project Grant money which could be used to store sports equipment and items currently held in the garage.
- It was suggested that the budgets for Hall Tower field, the Pavilion and Scholes Lodge Field be cut, a 50% reduction would reduce the Hall Tower field budget to £1,895 and the Scholes Lodge field budget to £1,898. The Pavilion budget would be reduced from £2,260 to £1,400. The Clerk had approached the contractor who cuts the flat area of Hall Tower field and he had confirmed that he would be holding his prices. The Clerk would make a similar approach to the contractor who cuts the mound.
- There was uncertainty regarding the budget for the allotments as there were ongoing plans to form a separate Allotment Association. This had been delayed due to availability of someone from the National Allotment Association (NAS) to come to an initial meeting. There could be legal fees in drafting an agreement between the PC and the proposed Allotment Association, possibly in the region of £2,500 (based on historical solicitor's fees). The NAS may be able to offer support in this regard, but this might not be as favourable to the PC as using a solicitor.
- It was suggested that the Environment Funds for each village be reduced from £1,250 to £1,000 each.

- It was proposed that the budget for Christmas Lights be capped at £4,000 with top ups from grant funding and possible contributions from shop sponsorship. There would be no lamp post conversions in the budget.
- It was suggested that newsletter costs could be reduced by only having three newsletters a year and keeping these to eight pages as content allowed and ensuring the print run did not exceed 2,300 copies.
- The Peace Flame ~~should be~~ **is** self-funding and therefore has a net zero cost in the budget.
- Sports Field Drainage. This project had been completed apart from some remedial work the cost of which would come from unused Community Infrastructure Levy.
- The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee had requested a budget of £2,500. It wasn't clear when they would need to go out to consultation but the changes to the original plan were not extensive. Grant funding for Neighbourhood Plans was available.
- Cllr. Slater reminded everyone of a resolution made at a PC meeting two or three years ago that £500 a per year be set aside annually for defibrillator maintenance. That any unspent amount be carried over up to a maximum of £1,500.
- Staffing costs should not be itemised on any financial documents in the public domain, just a total figure would suffice.

All the above changes reduced the £72,257 expenditure in version 1 of the budget to £56,476. It was therefore agreed to make a recommendation to the PC to accept the revised budget and to recommend a precept increase of 8%. It was agreed that the PC could be given opportunity to consider a review of the Reserves Policy.

5. ACTION TRACKER

A recommendation regarding the purchase of a further three tons of topsoil for maintenance of Scholes Sports field would be made to the PC.

The meeting closed at 7:40pm.

Signed

Chair