



MINUTES

Meeting: FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE **Date:** 17th November 2014 **Time:** 7.35pm

Venue: NORTH WEALD LIBRARY, 138 HIGH ROAD, NORTH WEALD, ESSEX

PRESENT:

Councillors (13) C Hawkins (Chairman), B Bartram, N Bedford, T Blanks, B Clegg, P Collins, B Eldridge, A Buckley, Mrs E Godwin-Brown, Mrs D Adams, Mrs A Grigg*, G Mulliner, R Spearman
* for part of meeting

Also in Attendance (2)

Susan De Luca – Parish Clerk
Adriana Jones – Principal Finance Officer

Members of the Public (0)

No Members of the public were present.

F.1401 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (2)

NOTED that apologies had been received from Councillors McCormack and Stallan.

F.1402 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

NOTED there were no other absences.

F.1403 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

NOTED there were no declarations of interest.

F.1404 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

NOTED there were no Members of the Public present.

F.1405 BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2015/2016

Members had been issued with Income and Expenditure papers which, following thorough investigation by the Principal Finance Officer (PFO), included suggested budget figures for 2015/2016. Members had been advised to review these figures prior to the meeting, and if any members had any questions, these could be individually discussed at the meeting. Some of the main points of discussion were as follows:

- The PFO confirmed that she had claimed the first trimester VAT return.
- It was noted that it was agreed some years back, the ongoing maintenance costs for Weald Common should come out of the Weald Common earmarked reserve, hence no specific figure was budgeted for these works (although this is done internally).
- Cllr Grigg stated that the figures highlighted in the blue column were not easy to read.
- More involvement is needed from Councillors for any bulb planting that takes place in 2015, with a suggested minimum number of 5. Cllr Bedford

suggested the Probation Service may be available to help. Cllr Buckley requested a bulb planting schedule for 2015 should be circulated to Councillors so that Councillors can confirm their attendance.

- The Clerk informed Councillors that she was now in possession of the revised Sec 106 agreement for the remaining £50,000 from the Brent House Farm development, which secured these funds to a more extended deadline. The Clerk also informed Councillors that she had recently attended a meeting of the Hastingwood Village Hall Committee, at which both Councillor Bartram and Councillor Eldridge were present, and had informed the Committee of this. Attached to the agenda were details of works required at the Village Hall, which was expected to exceed the £100,000 awarded via the Sec 106. The Clerk had advised the Committee that they may be able to obtain funding of approximately £15,000 towards the creation of a Disabled Toilet via the CIF. Cllr Grigg asked if the Clerk had had sight of any quotes for the works listed in their paperwork, to which the Clerk confirmed she had. Cllr Bartram reported that the hall is suffering from damp. Cllr Grigg asked if the Committee had approached the Church for funding, to which the Clerk stated she was not aware that they had.

Cllr Mulliner stated that it may be possible to completely rebuild the hall for the cost it would take to renovate it, and it was suggested the Committee be informed that this may be a more appropriate option.

After discussion, it was **AGREED** that £20,000 should be precepted for to put towards these works.

- A quote had been received from the councils handyman to create a path using type 1 media on the access to Weald Common, and up to both play areas, for £4,500. Councillors discussed this method, and agreed that a more permanent method (dug out, crushed concrete, type 1 then tarmac) should be used due to the ground conditions at this location. It was **AGREED** that £8,000 should be precepted for these works, plus an extra £2,000 taken from the Weald Common earmarked reserve.
- Councillors discussed the poor condition of the ground in the new play area, stating that worms are starting to come up through the wetpour. It was **AGREED** that the company who installed the wetpour should be contacted as they were advised that the ground was very wet at this location. Cllr Blanks suggested that this will be an ongoing problem due to the ground type and slope at this location, and it was suggested that perhaps a trench or drainage options should be looked at as a way to stop the ground being so wet. Cllr Buckley stated that whatever the method, this issue has to be resolved as it embarrassing for the Parish Council to have installed a play area that simply cannot be used. Cllr Bedford suggested bark is put down as a temporary measure. It was **AGREED** that the drainage option and the additional safety surfacing should both be considered.
- Cllr Blanks **PROPOSED** £50,000 should be precepted for the costs associated with the production of a Neighbourhood Plan due to both the internal and very real external threats to the Parish, the justification being that professional external help will need to be sought to support the Parish Council with the plan creation. Cllr Bedford **PROPOSED** £40,000 should be precepted for. Councillors noted the recent comments that were made by a District / County

Councillor concerning the production of the EFDC Local Plan, in that one larger development of housing would be the most likely way to go in order to gain the required infrastructure. Councillors also noted that there had been one response to the Neighbourhood Area Designation application from a developer suggesting that the Parish is effectively split in two by the M11, and it would make sense for the Designated Area to be the east side of the M11.

Cllr Grigg stated that it would be in Essex County Councils interest to have larger developments as this will secure the infrastructure needed, however we have said we would accept our fair share of housing but as Ward Councillors we would oppose larger developments. Cllr Godwin-Brown suggested that as completed previously, the PFO could complete the works for the Neighbourhood Plan. The PFO stated that whilst she could do most of the administrative work, there were elements of the plan that would need professional advice / guidance, and as such she could not do it all. Cllr Grigg stated that consultants simply gather the views of lots of different people and collate that into a specific format, which isn't particularly difficult. Councillor Collins **SECONDED** the proposal for £40,000. A vote was taken on the proposed increase from £20,000 to £40,000, the results of which were as follows:

- 7 - For (Cllrs Hawkins, Collins, Bedford, Bartram, Blanks, Buckley, Spearman)
- 5 - Against (Cllrs Grigg, Clegg, Godwin-Brown, Mulliner, Adams)
- 1 - Abstentions (Cllr Eldridge)

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to budget £40,000 for the completion of a Neighbourhood Plan, made up of £30,000 precepted for, £9,409 from Forward Planning Earmarked Reserve, and the remaining £689 coming from General Reserves.

- The Clerk reminded Councillors that the National Grid had removed the notice board from near the Talbot roundabout, and tarmaced over the surface. Cllr Bedford suggested that if the Parish Council had pictorial evidence that the notice board was at this location, they should pursue it via the County Courts for £700. This was **AGREED**.
- It was **AGREED** to place a collection box in the office for donation towards Essex Air Ambulance for the coffee and tea provided.
- Cllr Buckley gave an overview of the suggested flower bed in front of the shops in North Weald, summarising the problem in terms of permanent hardware fixtures in place. It was noted that £250 was in an earmarked reserve for these works. Cllr Buckley stated that long lasting shrubs would be planted in this area to keep any maintenance costs at a low level. Cllr Hawkins suggested that fund raising could be completed for these works. It was suggested that perhaps bollards could be placed at this location to stop vehicles parking on the pavement. After discussion, it was **AGREED** that the earmarked reserve of £5,092 for a Community Project should be put towards the creation of a flower bed at this location, together with the £1,000 held for the Bassett Millennium Walks. The Clerk confirmed she had been in discussion with BT and ECC as they have an interest either the land of items on it.
- Councillors **AGREED** that an 'appropriate' bench should be sourced for the School Green Lane Play area to a maximum cost of £500, the funds for which

should be taken from the 'Notice Board outside Library' earmarked reserve, as permission for a notice board outside the library had not yet been obtained.

- Councillors **NOTED** that a resident had requested (via Cllr Stallan) that a dog bin be installed in Church Lane. Councillors **AGREED** that this should be looked at in further detail by the Environmental Committee, who can make a decision as to its need.
- Councillors **AGREED** that the floor should be restripped at the Parish Hall, and that the refund of the rates should be used for these works.
- Cllr Bartram reported on the concerns regarding the Queens Hall Charity, stating that slowly but surely processes were being put in place to bring the Charity up to an appropriate operational condition, however there is nobody willing to act as secretary. Cllr Bartram stated he could not do it as he was unable to take minutes whilst conducting his role as Chairman, and the Clerk stated that she simply did not have enough time. After discussion, it was **AGREED** that £364 should be given to the Queens Hall Charity for the cost of hiring an administrator at £7/hour for a 1 year period. Cllr Grigg requested that her vote against this be recorded.
- Cllr Spearman asked if the Queens Hall Charity are able to obtain a rates rebate, to which the Clerk stated that at present they receive an 80% discount, which means they are unable to retrospectively claim a refund, however she has asked the Treasurer to lodge this for next year.
- Members **NOTED** that the Quality Council scheme has been superseded by the Standards of Practice Scheme, which has three tiers of achievement. This Council automatically attains the first tier which is Foundation status for the first year, however the Clerk would like to progress the scheme in order to attain Gold status which is the highest level. Cllr Collins asked what the benefit was of achieving gold status, to which the Clerk stated that when the Council apply for grants they would be looked at more favourably, as well as increasing the kudos of the Council with other local authorities. In addition, the new scheme is primarily web based, which also increases transparency with local residents. Cllr Bedford concurred stating that this is something that would be beneficial to the Council and its residents, and is effectively a Continuous Professional Development for Councillors and the Council alike. Councillors **AGREED** the Clerk should move forward to obtain Gold status.

Members looked at the total anticipated expenditure for 2015/2016 against income in order to establish what the precept for this period should be. The following budget figures for 2015/2016 were agreed.

2015 2016 Budget / Precept

		BUDGET		
		2015/2016		
Item		Income	Expenditure	
Bank Interest		100	0	<u>100</u>
Miscellaneous		10,545	0	<u>10,545</u>
	<i>Donations</i>	0	0	
	<i>Repayments and Refunds</i>	0	0	
	<i>Grants</i>	10,545	0	
Parish Hall		<u>14,596</u>	<u>16,310</u>	<u>-1,714</u>
	<i>Hall Hirer (Regular - Own Ins)</i>	8,000	0	
	<i>Miscellaneous</i>	0	0	
	<i>Returnable Deposit</i>	0	0	
	<i>Music Licence</i>	80	80	
	<i>Hall Hirer (occasional)</i>	6,000	0	
	<i>Hall Hire - Storage</i>	516	0	
	<i>Rates</i>	0	0	
	<i>Utilities</i>	0	3100	
	<i>General Maintenance</i>	0	2000	
	<i>Bin Hire / Empty</i>	0	830	
<u>Salaries</u>				
	<i>Basic Salary - P/Hall</i>	0	4900	
	<i>Superannuation - P/Hall</i>	0	2400	
	<i>Travel & Subsistence P/Hall</i>	0	0	
	<i>Temporary Cover - P/Hall</i>	0	0	
	<i>Tax & NI - P/Hall</i>	0	100	
	<i>Overtime - P/Hall</i>	0	2900	
	<i>Structural Repairs Fund</i>	0	0	
Cemetery		<u>7,500</u>	<u>7,250</u>	<u>250</u>
	<i>Plot Purchase</i>	2,500	0	
	<i>Interment</i>	4,000	0	
	<i>Memorials</i>	1,000	250	
	<i>Miscellaneous</i>	0	0	
	<i>Transfer Fee</i>	0	0	
	<i>GOR Grant Renewal</i>	0	0	
	<i>Utilities</i>	0	50	
	<i>Grounds Maintenance</i>	0	5500	
	<i>Furniture</i>	0	0	
	<i>Bin Hire / Empty</i>	0	450	
	<i>Grave Digging Fees</i>	0	1000	
Open Spaces		<u>280</u>	<u>9,466</u>	<u>-9,186</u>
	<i>Dog Bins</i>	280	1850	
	<i>Bluemans End Rental</i>		216	
	<i>Bluemans End Maintenance</i>		1100	
	<i>Noticeboards</i>		100	
	<i>Bus Shelter Maintenance</i>		50	

Vandalism Contingency		200	
Norwegian Memorial		900	
Public Seats		50	
School Green Lane Play Area		800	
Village Sign and Grass		600	
Miscellaneous		100	
Pike Way		800	
Thornwood Nature Reserve		400	
TW Field Fund		0	
TW Grounds Maintenance		1500	
TW Play Area Maintenance		800	
Allotments	2,000	2,100	-100
Rent	2,000	0	
WFG Key Deposit	0	0	
Utilities	0	900	
Grounds Maintenance	0	800	
Miscellaneous	0	400	
Weald Common	0	0	0
Grounds Maintenance	0	0	
WC Play areas	0	0	
Remembrance Sunday	1,200	1600	-400
General Admin	0	18,086	-18,086
Telephones & Internet	0	1780	
Stationery	0	1900	
Maintenance & Equipment	0	1000	
Photocopier	0	3500	
Postage	0	400	
Audit	0	1300	
Books & Publications	0	50	
Training	0	1000	
Insurance	0	3033	
Subscriptions	0	1700	
Accommodation	0	2173	
Emergency Planning	0	50	
Community Day	0	0	
Hospitality Allowance	0	200	
Bank Charges	0	0	
Website	0	0	
Salaries - Office	0	83,300	-83,300
Basic Salary - Admin		51000	
Tax & NI - Admin		14100	
Superannuation - Admin		16200	
Travel & Subsistence - Admin		1000	
Temporary Cover - Admin		0	
Overtime - Admin		1000	
Street Lighting	0	5,100	-5,100
Electricity Supply	0	2900	
Light Maintenance	0	2200	

Bassett Millennium Walks	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	0
Elections	<u>250</u>	<u>0</u>	250
Miscellaneous Contingency	<u>0</u>	<u>2,500</u>	-2,500
Public Works Loan Board	<u>0</u>	<u>2,394</u>	-2,394
Newsletter costs	<u>0</u>	<u>700</u>	-700
Total 36,471 148,806			

The following additional items were **AGREED**, and should be read in conjunction with the notes included in these minutes:

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

	Item	Proposed	AGREED		Notes on agreement
			Precept	Earmarked	
1	Recoup monies used for Cemetery Works	£1,000	£0	£0	AGREED the funds were sufficient at this stage, and no further funds should be placed into this earmarked reserve.
2	Play Area Emergency Works Fund	£500	£500	£0	AGREED to precept £500 to go straight into an earmarked reserve
3	Weald Common	£400	£400	£0	AGREED to precept £400 per year for the next 25 years to go into the Weald Common earmarked reserves
4	Repayment of PWLB	£0	£0	£0	AGREED not to move forward with it this year.
5	Play in the Park	£195	£195	£0	AGREED that 3 events should be held, 1 at Queens Hall, 1 at Thornwood, and 1 at Norway House.
6	Joint Standards Committee	£500	£0	£0	AGREED not to precept for this earmarked reserve for 2015/2016
7	Grants for local organisations	£0	£0	£0	AGREED not to precept for this for 2015/2016
8	Bulb Planting 2015/2016	£150	£150	£0	AGREED
9	Resurfacing Parish Hall car park	£4,000	£0	£3,000	AGREED to use the £3000 cable works fund earmarked reserve
10	Hastingwood Village Hall works	£20,000	£20,000	£0	AGREED to precept £20,000 for the Village Hall.

11	Weald Common Access	£8,000	£0	£8,000	AGREED that the £8,000 set aside in the earmarked reserve account for 'Parish car park works' should be reallocated for these works./
12	Weald Common Play Area - Wetpour / Artificial grass	£10,000	£8,000	£2,000	AGREED that £8,000 should be earmarked for these works, plus £2,000 taken from the Weald Common earmarked reserve.
13	Neighbourhood Plan	£20,000	£30,000	£9,409	AGREED that the £9,409 earmarked for 'future planning' should be reallocated to the Neighbourhood Plan earmarked funds.
14	Replacement Notice Board at Tylers Green	£600	£0	£0	AGREED that the Parish Council should pursue the County Court in trying to claim these monies back from the National Grid
15	Essex Ambulance Service	£100	£0	£0	AGREED to obtain a donation box for the library
16	Flower bed in front of Shops, North Weald	£5,925	£0	£6,092	AGREED that the earmarked funds for a 'Community Project' of £5,092 should be reallocated for these works, together with the earmarked funds of £1,000 for the Bassett Millennium Walks'.
17	Bench for School Green Lane Play Area	£500	£0	£500	AGREED to take £500 out of the 'Notice Board outside Library' earmarked reserve for these works, and that a suitable bench (preferably metal) should be sourced.
18	Dog Bin, Church Lane	£350	£0	£0	AGREED that this issue should be passed to the Environmental Committee to consider.
19	Restrip Floor at Parish Hall	£4,000	£0	£5,201	AGREED the rates rebate can be used for these works.
20	Administrative Assistant Queens Hall	£364	£364	£0	Councillors AGREED to provide the Queens Hall Charity with funds to put towards the hire of an Administrator at the Queens Hall Charity
Total Additional Items		76584	£59,609	£34,202	
			£93,811		

MINUTES

Meeting: F&GP MEETING

Date: 17th November 2014

Councillor Blanks **PROPOSED** a 24% increase in the precept for 2015/2016, thereby bringing the precept to **£172,034**. This was **SECONDED** by Cllr Eldridge. A vote was taken, the results of which were as follows:

- 10 - For
- 3 - Against (Cllr Mulliner, Cllr Grigg, Cllr Godwin-Brown)

The Council therefore **RESOLVED** to put a recommendation to full Council to request a precept of £172,034 for the period 2015/2016.

Cllr Blanks asked when the Council needed to inform Epping Forest District Council of their precept request. The Clerk stated that officially its 31st March 2014, however EFDC request it by 31st January 2014. Cllr Blanks stated that in light of this increase, and assuming it is resolved at full Council, EFDC should be notified of this councils precept request as soon as possible. This was **AGREED**.

Cllr Mulliner requested that a summary of the price per household for all the parish / town councils in the district would be very helpful for Councillors to ascertain where they fall compared to other areas.

Councillors **AGREED** that a notice should be included in the Village Life to explain the increase in precept and reason for it, and that this increase should be communicated to the press with the justification.

With there being no further items to discuss, the meeting was closed.

Meeting closed

Signed

Date