



**MINUTES**

**Meeting:** FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE    **Date:** 18th December 2017    **Time:** 7.15pm

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

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**PRESENT:**

**Councillors (10)**    A Buckley (Chairman), B Bartram, T Blanks, B Clegg, B Eldridge, Mrs E Godwin-Brown, R Spearman, Mrs S Jackman MBE, A Tyler, D Stallan.

**Also in Attendance (2)**

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

**Members of the Public (0)**

**Members of the Press (1)**

**F.1701 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (3)**

**NOTED** apologies had been received from Councillors Mrs A Grigg, N Bedford and G Mulliner.

**F.1702 OTHER ABSENCES (0)**

**NOTED** there were no other absences.

**F.1703 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Spearman declared a pecuniary interest in the Local Plan.

**F.1704 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None.

**F.1705 DATA PROTECTION TRAINING**

Included within the budget for 2018/2019 is the cost of data protection training for councillors. The Clerk wanted to ensure everybody was able to attend as the session was £250 for a 2 hour session. The Training would be conducted by the same organisation who carried out the Data Protection Audit. Councillors **AGREED** a date for Saturday 10th March 2018 for the training to take place.

**F.1706 BUDGET / PRECEPT 2018/2019**

Members had been issued with Income and Expenditure papers which, following thorough investigation by the Principal Finance Officer (PFO), which included suggested budget figures for 2018/2019, along with supporting notes. 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. The PFO advised Councillors of one alteration to the figures as a result of a calculation failure identified by Cllr Blanks, and showed the updated spreadsheet live at the meeting.

Cllr Blanks advised that he had reviewed the paperwork and proposed 2018/2019 budget figures, and felt that some of them were optimistic and required revising. Cllr Blanks talked through each of his proposed revisions, and following main points were **NOTED** and/or **AGREED**:

- The budget for staff salaries were increased by 3%, which in turn increased the PAYE and Superannuation by 3%. The Clerk advised that notification had been received of a proposed 2% pay increase for all UK Local Government Staff, however this was yet to be agreed.
- The £0.45p/mile payment for mileage was set as it was a non taxable amount.
- Photocopying costs increased due to expected Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan photocopying.
- Remembrance Sunday expenditure was increased to ensure sufficient funds were available for the 2018 events, including the fact that the Parish Council would possibly be involved in additional events due to it being the 100th Anniversary of the end of WW1. Cllr Stallan advised that additional events at a District level were being already being planned.
- £1,800 had been set aside in this year's accounts for the hedging works for the new Meadowbrook section of the cemetery.
- Once the BT box outside the shops in North Weald has been removed, there may be a degree of making good work required. This has been included in the Misc Expenses for Open spaces for 2018/2019. Anything specific for this site will come out of Phase 2 Garden Outside Shop EMR.
- Concern was expressed at the future costs associated with Street Lighting, as all the Street Lights owned by the Parish Council were getting very old, with many lights now requiring new heads (approx £300 per light). This may not be the most cost effective solution long term solution. LED lighting was also suggested as a way forward. The Clerk advised that LED lighting could not be done in isolation, and a group of lights would need to be changed. This issue was also addressed further in the meeting.
- Grounds maintenance expected costs were increased.

The following budget figures were **AGREED**.

## 2018/2019 budget paperwork

		2018/2019 BUDGET
<b>GENERAL ADMINISTRATION</b>		
<b>Income</b>		
1080	Miscellaneous Income	0
1081	Repayments and Refunds	0
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
4001	Staff Salaries	59,225
4003	Superannuation	22,145
4004	Overtime	2,000
4005	Temporary Staff	0
4008	Training	750
4009	Travelling Costs	2,200
4013	Rent	2,173
4019	Hospitality / Chairman Allw	50
4020	Misc. Expenses	1,300
4021	Phone Fax Internet	1,800
4022	Postage	400
4023	Stationery	1,800
4024	Subscriptions	1,950
4025	Insurance	3,400
4028	Books & Publications	50
4029	Photocopier Costs	3,500
4035	Newsletter DO NOT USE	0

4040	Equipment Maintenance	200
4041	Equipment & Small Tools	200
4051	Bank Charges	130
4053	Loan Capital Repaid (PWLB)	1,719
4054	Loan Interest Paid (PWLB)	675
4057	Audit Fees - External	600
4058	Audit Fees - Internal	900
4070	Tax and NI	22,454
4075	Website	100
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>129,721</b>

<b>PRECEPT AND INTEREST</b>		
1176	Precept	
1177	Precept Support Grant	3,514
1190	Interest Received	150
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>3,664</b>

<b>CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC</b>		
<b>Income</b>		
1082	Donations Received	0
1178	Grants Received - Other	0
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
4019	Hospitality / Chairman's allowance	150
4020	Misc. Expenses	400
4025	Insurance	0
4035	Newsletter	1,000
4040	Equipment Maintenance	500
4071	Grants Other	100
4143	Election Expenses	250
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
4160	Neighbourhood Plan	0
4163	Community Day	500
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>2,900</b>

<b>REMEMBRANCE DAY</b>		
<b>Income</b>		
1041	Remembrance Day Income	1,100
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>1,100</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
4142	Remembrance Sunday	1,600
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>1,600</b>

<b>GRANTS</b>		
1178	Grants Received - Other	0
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>0</b>
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>0</b>

<b>CAPITAL AND PROJECT</b>		
1080	Miscellaneous Income	0

1082	Donations Received	0
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>0</b>

**PARISH HALL AT THORNWOOD**

**Income**

1001	Hall Hire - Regular Users	11,000
1002	Hall Hire - Occasional Users	5,000
1003	Hall Hire - Storage charges	516
1007	Hall Hire - Music Licences	60
1009	Hall Hire - Misc Income	0
1082	Donations Received	0
1178	Grants Received - Other	0
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>16,576</b>

**Expenditure**

4001	Staff Salaries	5,768
4003	Superannuation	2,369
4004	Overtime	1,545
4010	Misc. Staff Costs	0
4014	Utilities	3,400
4016	Cleaning Materials	350
4020	Misc. Expenses	1,200
4026	Music Licence	100
4036	Property Maintenance	1,500
4037	Grounds Maintenance	800
4040	Equipment Maintenance	500
4041	Equipment & Small Tools	250
4049	Litter Collection Contract	900
4070	Tax and NI	50
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>18,732</b>

**CEMETERY**

**Income**

1011	Cemetery Interment Fees	5,000
1012	Cemetery Memorial Fees	2,000
1013	Cemetery GOR Purchase	0
1015	Cemetery Transfers	0
1080	Miscellaneous Income	0
1083	Cemetery Plot Purchase	4,000
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>11,000</b>

**Expenditure**

4014	Utilities	50
4020	Misc. Expenses	2,000
4036	Property Maintenance	500
4037	Grounds Maintenance	6,000
4043	Grave Digging	1,500
4049	Litter Collection Contract	550
4073	Cemetery Memorial costs	500
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>11,100</b>

**WEALD COMMON**

<b>Income - NIL</b>	<b>0</b>
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<b>Expenditure</b>		
4064	Weald Com Play Area	1,850
4074	Weald Common Grounds Maint	1,850
4105	Vandalism	0
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>3,700</b>

<b>OPEN SPACES</b>		
<b>Income</b>		
1031	Dog Bin Recharge Income	280
1084	Sponsorship	300
1178	Grants Received - other	0
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>580</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
4013	Rent	5
4020	Misc. Expenses	750
4036	Property Maintenance	100
4037	Grounds Maintenance	300
4066	Thornwood Play Area	1,700
4102	Notice Boards	200
4104	Bus Shelters	50
4105	Vandalism	200
4106	Dog Waste Bins	1,550
4107	Street Signs & Furniture	50
4148	Bluemans End Rental	215
4149	Bluemans End Maintenance	1,300
4150	Norwegian Mem Grnds Maint	1,050
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
4153	Play in the Park	130
4155	Pike Way	1,000
4156	Village Sign	730
4157	Thornwood Common	1,800
4159	SGL Play Area	1,300
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>12,430</b>

<b>STREET LIGHTING</b>		
<b>Income - Nil</b>		
<b>Expenditure</b>		
4068	Street Lighting Maintenance	3,900
4072	Street Lighting Electricity	5,700
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>9,600</b>

<b>ALLOTMENTS</b>		
<b>Income</b>		
1021	Allotment Rents	2,400
1022	Allotment Key Deposits	0
1080	Miscellaneous Income	0
1178	Grants Received - Other	0
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>2,400</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
4014	Utilities	650

4020	Misc. Expenses	400
4036	Property Maintenance	100
4037	Grounds Maintenance	1,150
4040	Equipment Maintenance	100
4041	Equipment & Small Tools	0
4151	Key Deposit	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>2,400</b>

<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>35,320</b>
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<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>192,183</b>
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Councillors reviewed the proposed Additional Items, the main points of discussion including the following:

Chairs for the Parish Hall at Thornwood

Members recalled that for this financial year it was agreed to replace 20 of the Parish Hall's chairs with 20 new padded chairs at a cost of £880, and that a rolling programme of replacement would take place. However, at the Parish Hall at Thornwood Committee's meeting the prior week, the Caretaker gave an example of the three different types of chairs current in situ at the hall, and how they cause stacking problems. The general consensus at the Parish Hall meeting was that adding a further 'fourth' type of chair to the mix would cause even more problems, and it was suggested by the Committee that a full replacement of the chairs would be the best way forward. The Committee had also agreed that the old chairs should be sold on EBay if this was felt appropriate. A total of 100 chairs (80 in addition to the 20 already agreed) were needed. Councillors **NOTED** that the structural fund for the hall stood at £28,735. Cllr Stallan advised that he would be putting forward a further suggested additional item later in the meeting, and as such this item was deferred until later in the meeting. After further discussion (throughout the meeting) it was **AGREED** that the cost of these additional 80 chairs should come directly from the Parish Halls Earmarked Reserve.

Grit Bin

The Clerk advised that following the heavy snow the previous week, there had been many requests from local residents on Facebook for Grit Bins to be located at strategic points throughout the Village of North Weald as well as a number of offers from residents to take part on the Grit / Salt Scheme. The Clerk advised that three years ago the Parish Council had tried in vain to secure volunteers for this scheme, however this could have been due to the timing of the request (registration takes place in July each year). The Clerk felt that striking whilst the iron was hot was a good idea, and that if this was agreed for North Weald, it should also be considered for Thornwood and Hastingwood. Cllr Eldridge asked if the grit was for pavements, to which the Clerk advised that it would be up to the volunteers to decide where to place the grit. Cllr Stallan recalled that there did used to be County Grit Bins in North Weald, and that the reason County got rid of them was because they were abused. Cllr Stallan was positive about the fact there were volunteers who had put themselves forward, however the problem is that these volunteers would not distribute the Grit around the village and it would only be a localised solution. In addition, the location of Grit Bins may not be near the volunteers. Cllr Clegg asked if this would include volunteers placing salt onto the various roads around the village, to which the Clerk advised this would not be the case as specific training would be needed for salt use and there would also be H&S factors to consider. Grit bins would need to be located at strategic locations around the Parish. Cllr Stallan felt that this could cause more problems than it would solve with almost all areas in the village being classified as strategic locations in the view of residents. Cllr Stallan stated that whilst he understood the idea behind this suggestion, he would not support the

proposal for five grit bins to be strategically located throughout the Village. Cllr Eldridge **SECONDED** this. Cllr Mrs Jackman expressed concern about the insurance risk to the Parish Council. The Clerk stated that many residents seemed very enthusiastic about the scheme. After further discussion, it was **AGREED** that the Parish Council would take part of the Salt Scheme for the 2018/2019 season, and Volunteers would be recruited, and that £200 would be precepted for the Grounds Maintenance Contractor costs for works associated with this.

#### Front Doors, Parish Hall

Cllr Spearman, Chairman of the Parish Hall at Thornwood Committee, advised Councillors that the current doors on the hall were in fact domestic doors, and that they have been damaged previously. In terms of security, more suitable doors are required. At this stage, only one quote had been obtained. After further discussion (throughout the meeting) it was **AGREED** that the cost of these works should come directly from the Parish Hall Earmarked Reserve.

#### Electrical Works, Parish Hall

Councillors **NOTED** that these works were urgently needed, and it was **AGREED** that these funds should be specifically precepted for.

#### Portacabins to replace Garages at Parish Hall

The Clerk advised that the two garages at the rear of the Parish Hall had gone past their useful life, and were no longer fit for purpose. The Clerk advised that she was hoping to source funding, possibly via the ECC CIF fund, for these works. Any such portacabins would be purchased and not hired. The Garages were used to house Parish Council equipment, as well as a small amount of Festival equipment, however this would not be continuing. Dependent on the size of each portacabin, it may be that only one would be required. Cllr Clegg expressed his concern that if portacabins were purchased, disposal of such items were extremely difficult, and suggested perhaps a pre-fabricated garage could be a useful alternative. Cllr Stallan asked if this extra storage was definitely needed, to which the Clerk confirmed it was. The Chairman advised that he would be happy to look at the capacity of the two garages at the moment, compare this with the different sizes of containers available, and that he would be happy to visit a supplier of such containers and look at durability to see if they were suitable. Cllr Clegg advised he would like to complete this task with the Chairman. This was **AGREED**.

#### Debt of Honour

Cllr Stallan expressed his concern that the proposed budget amount of £1,000 would not be sufficient, and that his understanding was that there was a general consensus that the Parish Council would be happy to take on this responsibility. The Parish Council is already aware that there are issues concerning the Debit of Honour that would need some financial expenditure, and £1,000 would not be enough. In addition, if the Parish Council took on the responsibility of the Debit of Honour, and the 100th Anniversary events took place at this location, the Parish Council would need to ensure it was in a good state of repair. The PFO advised that this was an extremely difficult item to set a budget figure for, as it was effectively a finger in the wind situation. The Clerk advised that she had spoken with Derek Macnab, EFDC, and that if the Parish Council took this on, he would ensure it would be in a far better state than at this time. Cllr Bartram **PROPOSED** a figure of £5,000, which was **SECONDED** by Cllr Mrs Jackman. Cllr Tyler expressed his support for the Debit of Honour and the Parish Councils management of it, however had concerns that this figure was excessive amounting to almost £1 per elector, which was not particularly practical. A vote was taken on this proposal, the result being as follows:

*For - 5*

*Against - 6 (including Chairman's Casting Vote)*

The Chairman **PROPOSED** £3,000 should be precepted for. This was **SECONDED** by Cllr Mrs Godwin-Brown. A vote was taken as follows:

For - 9

Against - 1

It was there **AGREED** that £3,000 should be precepted for, and EFDC advised that it should be passed to the Parish Council in a good state of repair.

#### Local Plan Legal Advice

Cllr Stallan advised that the Local Plan Examination in public would be taking place in 2018, and suggested that although at this stage the Parish Council had yet to form its view on the Local Plan content, it would be prudent to precept for funds for any possible legal advice or representation, etc, in front of the Inspector. Cllr Tyler expressed his support of this suggestion. It was **NOTED** that the cost to this council for legal advice for the East of England Plan was extremely substantial in the tens of thousands. Cllr Mrs Jackman stated that there was roughly £38,000 in an Earmarked Reserve for the Neighbourhood Plan, and that at this stage in the Neighbourhood Plan process this seemed like a large amount of money to hold. The PFO advised that there had been a year delay in the Neighbourhood Plan process, and that this had contributed to there being a large sum of money being in the Earmarked reserve. In addition, £9,000 of this was grant funding received via Locality. The PFO advised that due to the complexities of the Neighbourhood Plan, she fully expected that consultants would be needed at some point to address certain issues, and that there were other Earmarked Reserves that could potentially be placed into an alternative pot if needed. Cllr Stallan stated that if the new Chairs and doors for the Parish Hall at Thornwood were purchased out of their own Earmarked Reserve, an amount could be precepted for Local Plan Legal advice which he felt was more important for this coming year. Cllr Stallan stated that residents may well expect the Parish Council to fight certain elements of the Local Plan, to which the Clerk stated that at this point in time no residents had made their views known to the Parish Council. It was **AGREED** that an amount of £10,000 should be precepted for possible legal advice concerning the Local Plan, and that if this money was not spent, the cost of the chairs and doors for the Parish Hall could be refunded out this money. In addition, it was **AGREED** that the Earmarked Reserve in place for 'Path to Weald Common' totalling £5,464 should also be moved to the Local Plan Legal Advice Earmarked Reserve.

#### Publicity

Councillors **AGREED** to the continued use of Everything Epping Forest as the Parish Councils press officer for 2018/2019 at a cost of £900.

#### Data Protection

Councillors **NOTED** that following the Data Protection Audit, an indicative figure for works associated with ensuring the Parish Council is compliant with the new GDPR was stated, however the PFO advised that she felt this was a conservative amount. Cllr Mrs Jackman enquired as to how this was managed when the Office Staff work at home, and it was explained that this would be addressed as part of the GDPR works, and it would also be addressed in the training. The PFO advised that this also applied to Councillors. Cllr Mrs Jackman stated that her understanding was that you had to be demonstrable in your efforts to ensure compliance. The Clerk advised that the main concerns included the storage room at the Library, and the Parish Hall at Thornwood. Cllr Stallan advised that if Councillors received an email from a resident, this would be covered by the GDPR, and the storage of that email, or anything associated with that email would need to be managed in accordance with Data Protection law. After discussion, it was **AGREED** that £3,000 should be precepted for the associated works.

#### Street Lighting

Cllr Blanks addressed the issue of an aging bank of street lighting columns. The Clerk advised that it costs around £2,300 to replace a full lamp column, and all the Street Lighting columns were installed between 1950 and 1960 and had roughly a 30 year life span. To replace all the lamp

columns it would cost around £255,000. Cllr Stallan advised that we used to have an amount of money precepted for each year to replace one street column. The PFO advised that over 5 street lighting columns have been replaced over the past three years. It was **NOTED** that street lighting repairs would be an ever more prevalent issue / cost to the Parish Council. Cllr Tyler advised that there were very limited suppliers of street columns, and they were extremely expensive to purchase, however the majority of the cost was the installation due to the sizes of the street columns and equipment needed. Cllr Mrs Godwin-Brown suggested that if any lamp column head needed repairing at a cost of £300, these columns should in fact be fully replaced. Councillors **AGREED** with this suggestion, stating that a rolling program of replacement works should take place. The Chairman **PROPOSED** £5,000 should be precept for street lighting replacement works, rolling year on year. This was **SECONDED** by Cllr Tyler.

The final agreed figures for additional items for 2018/2019 are as follows:

## 2018/2019 Additional Items

	<u>Item</u>	<u>AGREED</u>
1	Play Area Emergency Works Fund (Move to EMR)	£ 500.00
2	Weald Common (Move to EMR)	£ 1,000.00
3	Play in the Park - two events in 2017	£ 130.00
4	Joint Standards Committee (Move to EMR)	£ 500.00
5	80 Chairs for Parish Hall at Thornwood - See note further in agenda	£ -
6	Grit Bins X 5 - See note further in the agenda	£ 200.00
7	Everything Epping Forest - Publicity	£ 900.00
8	Front Doors, Parish Hall - See note further in agenda	£ -
9	Electrical Works, Parish Hall	£ 4,000.00
10	Portacabins - Parish Hall - See note further in agenda	£ -
11	Debt of Honour	£ 3,000.00
12	Local Plan legal advice	£ 10,000.00
13	Street Lighting	£ 5,000.00
12	Data Protection	£ 3,000.00
<b>Total Additional Items</b>		<b>£ 28,230.00</b>

The Clerk advised that it recently came to the attention of the Clerk that there were two storage cupboards that were not being charged for in the Parish Hall in Thornwood, one for the Festival and one for the Village, however it was not clear what was within, or who managed the Village cupboard. It was suggested that all cupboards should be charged for to bring in additional funds for the Parish Hall. Cllr Clegg stated that he disagreed specifically with Mrs Hawkins being charged for a storage cupboard considering all the works that both herself and Cyril Hawkins have done for the Parish Hall over the past 25 years, especially considering that the events she helps run are all done for charity including notable charities such as St Clare's Hospice. The Clerk explained that it wasn't necessarily about the hall being hired out for free for charitable events, but

it was about agreeing a policy to ensure that a consistent approach was taken, and any deviation from that policy was formally agreed at a meeting. Cllr Clegg stated that he found it quite distasteful that something was charged for, when the money was going to charity. The Clerk advised that the hall itself was not a charity, and that there were administrative and other costs with running to hall. It was also noted that there were two storage areas - the extension and the kitchen - and who hired these cupboards needed to be regularised. The Clerk also stated that other regular hall hirers also put on events for which any income was given to charity, and it wasn't just Mrs Hawkins or the festival. Cllr Spearman advised that he felt Mrs Hawkins should have the storage cupboard for free. Cllr Blanks suggested that there could be different charges for different hirers. After further discussion, it was **AGREED** that the Parish Hall at Thornwood needed to clarify exactly who hired which cupboards, and who paid what, and that there needed to be a clear policy about what was charged for. This should be put to the February Parish Council meeting for discussion.

Councillor Bartram **PROPOSED** a 5% increase in the precept for 2018/2019. This was **SECONDED** by Cllr Eldridge . A vote was taken, the results of which were as follows:

10 - For  
0 - Against

The Council therefore **RESOLVED** to put a recommendation to full Council to request a precept of £184,249 for the period 2018/2019.

Meeting closed

**Signed** .....

**Date** .....