



MINUTES

Meeting: FINANCE & GENERAL
PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Date: 6th January 2014

Time: 7.50pm

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

PRESENT:

Councillors (12) C Hawkins (Chairman), B Bartram, N Bedford, T Blanks, B Clegg, B Eldridge, Mrs E Godwin-Brown, Mrs A Grigg, G McCormack, G Mulliner, R Spearman, D Stallan

Also in Attendance (2)

Susan De Luca – Parish Clerk

Adriana Jones – Finance and Administrative Officer

Members of the Public (0)

No Members of the public were present.

F.1307 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (2)

NOTED that apologies had been received from Councillors Buckley and Collins.

F.1308 OTHER ABSENCES (1)

NOTED other absences of D Adams.

F.1309 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

NOTED there were no declarations of interest.

F.1310 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

NOTED there were no Members of the Public present.

F.1311 BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2014/2015

Members recalled that the precept for 2013/2014 year was £152,002 (made up of a £13,265 Parish Support Grant from EFDC, and the **official** precept amount of **£138,737**). Members recalled that it was decided to 'view' the precept as being £152,002 so as not to show an 8.6% reduction in the precept (which was one of our concerns, and a letter was in fact written to EFDC explaining the Parish Councils concerns).

For 2014/2015, the precept was modelled on the same calculations, with the reduction in support grant being received for 2014/2015 being factored in (£11,461). At the November Finance and General Purposes meeting, a 0% increase in the budget for 2014/2015 was agreed (which was ratified at the December Parish Council meeting) citing the budget as being £152,002 (taking into account the Parish Support Grant due).

However, when the F&A Officer began to write the precept demand to EFDC, it was discovered that in order to show a 0% increase, the precept request would need to be for £138,737. Being as the excepted Parish Support Grant had already been factored into the expected income for 2014/2015, this presented a problem due to the Parish Council continuing to 'view' the precept as £152,002.

The Finance and Administrative Officer verbally talked through a discrepancy in the figures which had been discovered, together with a presentation to demonstrate why the error had occurred.

The F&A Officer, together with the Clerk, apologised for not picking up this error earlier, however explained the reason why this occurred.

In addition, Councillors noted that for 2013/2014, changes were made to the way in which Council Tax benefit is calculated in that Local Authorities are now required to set their own Local Council Tax Schemes (LCTS). This had the effect of reducing the Council Tax base figure for this Parish. For 2014/2015, Parishes were informed that a further 13.6% reduction would be made to the Parish Support Grant given by EFDC to Parish/Town Councils to offset the effect of LCTS, however on 6th January 2014, the F&A Officer was informed that this had changed, in the EFDC had now decided to apply the reduction on a proportionate basis (based on the Council Tax Base for this year) as it was felt fairer than to apply a blanket reduction. It should be noted however that this is subject to agreement (and possibly change) at the 20th January EFDC Finance and Performance Management Committee.

The budget for 2014/2015 had been calculated using £11,461 as the provisional Parish Support Grant, however due to these new changes, the updated Parish Support Grant figures was expected to be £12,464.

Councillors therefore **AGREED** the following:

1. The altered provisional Parish Support Grant figure of £12,464 should be updated on the expected income for 2014/2015
2. The additional item figure for Car Parking be reduced to £8,000
3. Changes be made to the spreadsheet used to calculate the budget / precept, to show the ACTUAL precept figure to be requested so that this error does not occur again.

The Clerk stated that due to the LCTS changes, it was likely the Parish Support Grant would be reduced, and potentially eventually abolished, over the coming years, and that this would result in any shortfall being dealt with by way of reductions in expenditure. Cllr Bedford suggested that perhaps in light of these issues, Council should consider increasing the precept for 2014/2015 by 1.99%. This was briefly discussed by Members, with some support, however it was **AGREED** to stick to a 0% increase for 2014/2015, and that the issue of increasing the precept for 2015/2016 be very carefully considered.

There was some discussion regarding Neighbourhood Planning, and whether or not this Parish Council should consider moving forward with a Neighbourhood Plan. The Clerk and F&A Officer explained the costings and involvement required with a Neighbourhood Plan, stating that whilst it is a fantastic project with many benefits to the Parish, it should be very carefully considered as there is much time, involvement and expense incurred. Timings concerning the EFDC Local Plan were also extremely important, and a NP would take approx 18 months to complete. The F&A Officer stated that she would be willing to hold a specific meeting to update Councillors on all that's involved in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. It was **AGREED** that this should be considered as part of the Budget and Precept procedure late 2014.

Therefore, the **AGREED** precept figure for 2014/2015 was set at £138,737, a 0% increase. Updated budget documents are detailed below.

2014/2015 BUDGET / PRECEPT

INCOME		2014/2015
		SUGGESTED BUDGET
101 Precept TOTAL		
103 Interest - Deposit TOTAL		80
104 VAT TOTAL		0
<i>Misc</i>	105/1 Donations	0
	105/2 Repayments and Refunds	0
	105/3 Grants	12,464
105 Miscellaneous TOTAL		12,464
<i>TWVH</i>	107/1 Hall Hire - Regular user (own Ins)	7,500
	107/2 Misc	0
	107/3 Returnable Deposit	0
	107/5 Hall Hirer - Occasional (no ins)	5,000
	107/6 Hall hire - Storage	612
107 Thornwood Village Hall TOTAL		13,112
<i>Cemetery</i>	108/1 Plot Purchase	2,000
	108/2 Interment	2,000
	108/3 Memorial	1,000
	108/4 Misc Funeral costs	0
	108/5 Transfer Fee	50
	108/6 GOR grant renewal	0
108 Cemetery TOTAL		5,050
109 Dog bin Recharge TOTAL		280
<i>Allotments</i>	110/1 Allotment Rental	1,862
	110/2 WFG Key Deposit	0
110 Allotments TOTAL		1,862
111 Weald Common Investments TOTAL		0
112 Remembrance Sunday TOTAL		1,100
TOTAL		33,948

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

Item **Amount** **NOTES**

1	Recoup monies used for Cemetery Works	£1,000	It was AGREED to precept £1,000 to be placed into earmarked reserves for Cemetery
2	Play Area Emergency Works Fund	£500	It was AGREED to precept £500 to be placed into an earmarked reserve for play area emergency works.
3	Repayment of PWLB	£0	It was NOTED that the current loan ends on 30th March 2025. Total cost to continue paying twice per year is £27,553.76, a difference of £2,774.76. It was AGREED that the F&A Officer should ascertain if lump sums can be paid off of this loan, and the financial implications of this, however not to pay off for this year.
4	Play in the Park	£200	It was AGREED that £200 should be precepted for this very useful community scheme.
5	Joint Standards Committee	£500	It was AGREED that £500 should be precepted to be placed in an earmarked reserve.
6	Grants for local organisations	£0	It was AGREED not to precept for these costs this year.
7	Bulb Planting 2014/15	£150	It was AGREED that £150 should be precepted for next year, however the Environmental Committee should look at planting poppies in light of the WWI anniversary.
8	Commemorative WWI booklet	£200	It was AGREED that £200 should be precepted for a booklet (full details to be confirmed) commemorating the lives of soldiers who fought in WWI.
9	Restrip Floor	£0	It was NOTED that the North Weald Village Hall have their floor stripped once every 4/5 years, however the TWVH have never had this done since the hall was opened. However, it was AGREED not to precept for these works.
10	Street Lighting - Insurance	£0	It was AGREED to continue with insurance by way of an external company.
11	Overhead Projector	£200	It was AGREED that the Chairman would ascertain if the projector could be fixed, if not, a letter should be written to the manufacturers, and if this did not resolve the issue, a new one should be purchased.
12	Tour de France	£500	It was AGREED that some form of celebrations would take place, and a contingency of £500 precepted for to cover these costs.
13	Roller Shutters - TWVH	£882	It was AGREED to precept £882 for these costs (please see previous notes in the agenda).

14	Resurfacing TWWH car park	£4,000	It was AGREED to precept £4,000 for these works (please see previous notes in the agenda).
	Car parks	£8,000	It was AGREED to precept £8,000 toward the costs of repairs to the car parks within the Parish.
15	1x set of doors TWWH Extension	£0	It was AGREED not to precept for these costs (please see previous notes in the agenda).
16	Weald Common Play Area	£0	It was AGREED not the precept for these costs (please see previous notes in agenda)
17	War Memorial St Andrews	£200	It was AGREED to precept £200 towards the cost of cleaning the war memorial at St Andrews Church.
18	Administration of Queens Hall	£0	The Clerk explained that this was suggested to the Queens Hall Charity as an idea for them to request a grant from the Parish Council to fund an administrator for the hall, however a large minority were completely against this idea, stating that there would be a caveat attached to any grant. It was therefore AGREED not to precept for any funds, to which a number of Councillors also stated it would be inappropriate to do so anyway.

Total Additional Items	£16,332
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2014/2015

	2014/2015	
Total Expected Income (excluding precept)	£33,948	(this includes the £12,464 Parish Support Grant)
Total Expected Expenditure (excluding additional items)	£156,162	
Total Income over Expenditure	£122,214	
Total anticipated Additional Items for 2014/2015 where costings are available	£16,332	
Total for 2014/2015	£138,546	
Total expected in Reserves	£173,456	
Of which the following are Earmarked	£140,331	
2013/2014 Precept Amount	2.5% decrease £138,737	Nil Increase £138,737
2014/2015 Precept Amount	£135,269	£138,737

MINUTES

Meeting: COUNCIL

Date: 6th January 2014

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

Meeting closed

Signed

Date