



North Weald Bassett

PARISH COUNCIL

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Clerk to the Council
Susan De Luca

14th November 2013

TO: MEMBERS OF THE NORTH WEALD BASSETT PARISH COUNCIL

You are hereby invited to attend a **Meeting** of the **Finance & General Purposes Committee** which will be held on **Monday 18th November 2013**, in the **Library, 138 High road, North Weald** at **7.30pm** to transact the business shown in the Agenda below.

Susan De Luca
Clerk to the Council

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To **RECEIVE** any apologies for absence.

2. OTHER ABSENCES

To **NOTE** any absences for which no apology has been received.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To **RECEIVE** any Declarations of Interest by Members.

A Member with a personal interest in a matter must consider whether it is a Disclosable Pecuniary, Non Pecuniary or Other Pecuniary Interest, and declare it accordingly. A Member who is unsure as to how to declare their interest should seek independent advice.

4. BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2014/2015 



A precept is a peremptory order to a billing authority (EFDC) to pay a parish council a named sum, payable in two separate instalments (April and September) which the billing authority draws up by 31st January for the following financial year.

The parish council, in calculating its precept, must as far as possible secure that it will suffice for four classes of items, namely:

- Next year's expenditure, including an allowance for contingencies
- Outstanding expenditure incurred in previous years

- Expenditure likely to be incurred before the precepted sum becomes available
- Payments to a sinking fund, capital fund or renewal and repairs fund

To enable Members to consider the budget for 2014/2015, detailed financial documentation has been attached for careful consideration by Members, and consists of the following:

| | |
|---------------|---|
| WHITE | Income and Expenditure breakdown (showing actual income/expenditure for 2012/2013, budget for this year, total received/spent this year, anticipated future receipts/spend this year, and suggested budget figure for 2014/2015). Plus, a sheet giving comments and explanations regarding various aspects of these sheets. |
| CREAM | Summary sheet (giving an overall picture of income and expenditure, and detailing the main differences in budget compared to expected income/expenditure for 2013/2014) |
| YELLOW | Details of earmarked reserves and general fund |
| GREEN | Additional precept items to be considered for 2014/2015 together with any associated paperwork. |
| PINK | Final Summary sheet with examples of how this would increase / decrease the precept together with the effect on households |

In order to ensure enough time is available to discuss all areas of the budget, Members are kindly asked to spend some time prior to the meeting perusing these figures, identifying any areas they wish to discuss in further detail or which require clarification. Members are free to contact the Finance and Administrative Officer prior to the meeting if preferred, which would ensure a timely end to the meeting. Councillors should also note that attached as part of the white papers is a document entitled 'Reference Supporting Statement'. These statements can be referenced to the relevant letters / numbers on the income and expenditure sheets as shown in the figure below, and may offer an explanation to your queries.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|-----|----|
| 501/14 Community Day | - | - | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 200 | X |
| 501/15 Hospitality Allowance | 100 | 193 | 100 | 0 | 150 | 150 | 0 | 0 | Y |
| 501/16 Bank Charges | - | 30 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Z |
| 501/17 Website | - | 840 | 300 | 0 | 113 | 113 | 0 | 200 | |
| 501 General Administration TOTAL | 18,883 | 17,909 | 20,206 | 11,698 | 7,308 | 19,006 | 19,663 | | |
| 502/1 Rates | 1,819 | 1,890 | 1,900 | 1,552 | 388 | 1,940 | 2,000 | | aa |
| 502/2 Utilities | 3,100 | 3,058 | 3,150 | 1,259 | 1,900 | 3,159 | 3,100 | | bb |
| 502/3 General Maintenance | 1,050 | 1,359 | 1,050 | 572 | 1,220 | 1,792 | 2,250 | | cc |
| 502/4 Grounds Maintenance | 1,700 | 1,008 | 1,500 | 420 | 960 | 1,380 | 1,400 | | dd |

It is emphasised that these figures are 'estimate' final income and expenditure figures for 2013/2014 and should be used as a guide when deciding the budget/precept figures for 2014/2015.

Some additional information for Members is as follows:

- The Council currently holds £50,000 by way of a section 106 agreement for works regarding the Brent House Farm development in Hastingwood. The second tranche of monies of £50,000 is expected to be received when works commence.

The Council are not permitted to spend the £50,000 held in the earmarked reserves until building begins.

Members are asked to **CONSIDER** the following:

- If any funds should be earmarked to account for the potential costs associated with community engagement for the Preferred Options stage of the Local Plan taking place in May-Sep 2014. It should be noted that one Parish Council increased their precept by 27% for 2013/2014 purely to be able to hire lawyers etc to protect the green belt in their area.
- Alternative quotes have been sourced for the grounds maintenance of Thornwood Common and the Cemetery. Copies of these quotes can be found under Additional Items (green papers).

Parish Support Grant from EFDC

Councillors may recall that due to the recent welfare reforms, the way in which council tax benefit is calculated has changed, with the responsibility for the benefit scheme being passed to, and agreed by, the local authority (EFDC). This subsequently meant a change in the council tax base, which in turn had the effect of showing a greater increase in the Parish Council percentage of council tax despite there being no changes. The effect this would have on town and parish councils was of great debate in 2012, the outcome of which was that EFDC agreed to pass on a percentage of the support grant they receive from Government to Parish Councils to offset this alteration.

In September 2013, the EFDC Finance Cabinet Committee considered a report submitted by Bob Palmer, Director of Finance and ICT EFDC, detailing that the grants for 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 (part of a current DCLG consultation) would be reduced. The Committee agreed that any reduction in the EFDC grant should be reflected in the grant paid to local councils. This would mean a reduction of 13.6% for 2014/2015 and a further reduction of 14.1% in 2015/2016. These reductions are subject to change dependent on the outcome of the consultation.

What this means in practice is that for last year, EFDC awarded the Parish Council £13,265 by way of a Parish Support Grant to offset the negative effect of the welfare reforms. For 2014/2015 (and assuming the above figures remain unchanged, and subject to changes in the council tax base) the figure will be reduced by 13.6% to £11,461.

Councillors should note that the final figures requirement in order to determine the council tax base are not expected to be released by Government until its Autumn Statement (due on 4th December), with final figures being made available to parish councils on 18th December.

Councillors should also note that a cap has been set on EFDC's ability to raise its precept without the need to go to a referendum - the cap being 2%. This cap does not currently apply to town and parish councils, however the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP has mentioned this in parliament on a number of occasions, and there is concern this could be introduced by way of an SI.

The District Council needs to be notified of the Precept request by **January 2014** and Members are, therefore, asked to **CONSIDER** the proposed 2014/2015 precept figures, and agree a recommended precept figure to be put forward to full council in January for ratification. This precept figure will include any agreed additional items.

As per last year, the Finance and Admin Officer will update the budget / precept spreadsheet during the meeting so that figures can be amended and viewed on a 'live' basis to enable members to have a clear idea of all the options.

5. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS 

In the event that the Agenda contains Exempt (pink) pages, or an item needs to be discussed confidentially, to **CONSIDER** the following motion to be proposed by the Chairman:

“That the public and the press be excluded from the meeting, the Council believing that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be discussed.”

There is currently ONE confidential item to be considered

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

This report is not available for public inspection as it contains or relates to exempt information within the meaning of the Paragraphs indicated of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, by virtue of which the public is likely to be excluded.

[Pink Pages]

6. STAFF SALARIES AND EMPLOYMENT (EXEMPT Para 3)

The following three items will be presented to the next Personnel Committee for consideration:

- The F&A Officer is expected to finish her CiLCA qualification before March 2014, and as such will be entitled to receive an upgrade of 1 scale point.
- An increase in scale point of 1 point for the Administrative Officer
- The continued employment of the Administrator for a period of 1 year, based on a renewable 3 month contract of employment at basic rate.

These factors have been accounted for in the 2014/2015 budget, however may be subject to change dependent on the agreements reached at the Personnel Committee meeting.