



MINUTES

Meeting: FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE **Date:** 16th December 2019 **Time:** 7.00pm

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

PRESENT:

Councillors (9) A Buckley (Chairman), T Blanks, B Clegg, A Irvine, R Spearman, Mrs S Jackman MBE, A Tyler, Mrs A Grigg, G Mulliner

Also in Attendance (2)

Susan De Luca – Clerk to the Council
Adriana Jones – Principal Finance Officer

Members of the Public (0)

Members of the Press (1)

F.1901 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (3)

NOTED apologies had been received from Councillors Eldridge, Stroud, and Mrs Wood.

F.1902 OTHER ABSENCES (1)

NOTED other absence of Cllr Bedford.

F.1903 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Spearman declared a pecuniary interest in any item concerning the Local Plan. Cllr Mrs Jackman declared a non pecuniary interest in any matter concerning Everything Epping Forest.

F.1904 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

F.1905 BUDGET / PRECEPT 2020/2021

Members had been issued with Income and Expenditure papers which, following thorough investigation by the Principal Finance Officer (PFO), included suggested budget figures for 2020/2021, 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 or they could speak with the Principal Finance Officer prior to the meeting.

The Chairman asked those present if they wished to discuss any matters concerning the white paper, which detailed this year's expected income and expenditure, and a proposed budget figure for each heading for 2020/2021. There were a number of questions raised and alterations made to budget figures, after which the following budget figures were **AGREED** for 2020/2021:

2020/2021 BUDGET

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION		
Income		
1080	Miscellaneous Income	0
1081	Repayments and Refunds	0
1178	Grants Received - Other	0
Total Income		-
Expenditure		
4001	Staff Salaries	70,000

4003	Superannuation	28,500
4004	Overtime	3,200
4005	Temporary Staff	1,000
4008	Training	750
4009	Travelling Costs	2,500
4013	Rent	2,173
4019	Hospitality / Chairman Allow	0
4020	Misc. Expenses	1,300
4021	Phone Fax Internet	1,700
4022	Postage	600
4023	Stationery	2,000
4024	Subscriptions	2,300
4025	Insurance	4,000
4028	Books & Publications	50
4029	Photocopier Costs	3,000
4040	Equipment Maintenance	4,140
4041	Equipment & Small Tools	300
4051	Bank Charges	100
4053	Loan Capital Repaid (PWLB)	1,927
4054	Loan Interest Paid (PWLB)	467
4057	Audit Fees - External	800
4058	Audit Fees - Internal	900
4070	Tax and NI	26,000
4075	Website	1,000
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
Total Expenditure		158,707

PRECEPT AND INTEREST

1177	Precept Support Grant	0
1190	Interest Received	500
Total Income		500

CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC

Income		
1082	Donations Received	0
1084	Sponsorship	0
1178	Grants Received - Other	0
Total Income		0
Expenditure		
4019	Hospitality / Chairman's allowance	150
4020	Misc. Expenses	3,500
4035	Newsletter	2,000
4037	Grounds Maintenance	400
4040	Equipment Maintenance	200
4071	Grants Other	100
4102	Notice Boards	200
4107	Street Signs and Furniture	0
4143	Election Expenses	0
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
4160	Neighbourhood Plan	0
Total Expenditure		6550

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Income		
1041	Remembrance Day Income	1,100
1084	Sponsorship	0
Total Income		1,100
Expenditure		
4019	Hospitality / chairman's Allow	100
4142	Remembrance Sunday	1,600
Total Expenditure		1,700

GRANTS		
1178	Grants Received - Other	0
Total Income		0
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
Total Expenditure		0

PARISH HALL AT THORNWOOD		
Income		
1001	Hall Hire - Regular Users	12,000
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
Total Income		17,576
Expenditure		
4001	Staff Salaries	6,500
4003	Superannuation	2,300
4004	Overtime	1,300
4014	Utilities	3,550
4016	Cleaning Materials	400
4020	Misc. Expenses	2,000
4026	Music Licence	150
4036	Property Maintenance	1,200
4037	Grounds Maintenance	750
4040	Equipment Maintenance	700
4041	Equipment & Small Tools	100
4049	Litter Collection Contract	950
4070	Tax and NI	300
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
Total Expenditure		20,200

CEMETERY		
Income		
1011	Cemetery Interment Fees	5,500
1012	Cemetery Memorial Fees	1,000
1013	Cemetery GOR Purchase	0
1015	Cemetery Transfers	0
1080	Miscellaneous Income	0
1083	Cemetery Plot Purchase	4,000
Total Income		10,500
Expenditure		
4014	Utilities	50

4020	Misc. Expenses	1,000
4036	Property Maintenance	500
4037	Grounds Maintenance	6,000
4043	Equipment Maintenance	0
4043	Grave Digging	1,500
4049	Litter Collection Contract	500
4073	Cemetery Memorial costs	500
4105	Vandalism	1,000
4152	Agreed Additional Items	0
Total Expenditure		11,050

WEALD COMMON		
Income - NIL		0
Expenditure		
4064	Weald Com Play Area	1,600
4074	Weald Common Grounds Maint	1,500
1405	Vandalism	0
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
Total Expenditure		3,100

OPEN SPACES		
Income		
1031	Dog Bin Recharge Income	280
1080	Misc Income	600
1084	Sponsorship	500
Total Income		1,380
Expenditure		
4020	Misc. Expenses	2,250
4036	Property Maintenance	100
4037	Grounds Maintenance	50
4040	Equipment Maintenance	100
4066	Thornwood Play Area	2,000
4102	Notice Boards	0
4104	Bus Shelters	50
4105	Vandalism	100
4106	Dog Waste Bins	2,300
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
4155	Pike Way	1,000
4156	Village Sign	650
4157	Thornwood Common	2,000
4159	SGL Play Area	1,000
Total Expenditure		14,215

STREET LIGHTING		
Income - Nil		
Expenditure		
4068	Street Lighting Maintenance	3,000
4072	Street Lighting Electricity	6,300

4152	Agreed Additional items	0
Total Expenditure		9,300

ALLOTMENTS		
Income		
1021	Allotment Rents	2,000
1022	Allotment Key Deposits	0
1178	Grants Received - Other	0
Total Income		2,000
Expenditure		
4014	Utilities	1,000
4020	Misc. Expenses	1,200
4036	Property Maintenance	100
4037	Grounds Maintenance	1,000
4040	Equipment Maintenance	100
Total Expenditure		3,400

TOTAL INCOME	£33,056
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TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£228,222
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The main points of discussion from the meeting were as follows:

Vandalism

Discussion took place as to the appropriateness and/or need to precept for Vandalism, being as any figure agreed would, at best, be an educated guess. Councillors referenced the recent vandalism at the Cemetery, expressing concern that this may occur again. It was **AGREED** that due to historic issues, funds should be precepted for, with any unused amounts being placed into the relevant Earmarked Reserve (EMR) at the end of the year. It was also **AGREED** that the need to precept for Vandalism should be considered at each Budget and Precept meeting going forward.

Play Area Emergency Works Fund

Councillors felt that £4,000 in this EMR at this stage was sufficient, and no further funds should be precepted for.

Neighbourhood Plan

Councillors **NOTED** that the draft plan was expected to be created in 2020, and this may possibly involve the need for consultant support, as well as designing and printing costs which could be relatively high. In light of the expected amount of EMR as at 31st March 2020, it was **AGREED** that a further £8,000 should be precepted for to cover these costs. Thanks were formally recorded to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group for their continuous hard work and effort with the Neighbourhood Plan.

Pipe Replacement Thornwood

Councillors **NOTED** that following works to the pipes and tanks at Thornwood Allotments, the Parish Councils contractor had advised that due to the poor quality of the pipe work, it may be that in the future this will need to be replaced, and it could be costly due to the pipe having to be sourced from America. Whilst it was agreed to precept some funds to go into an EMR for this, it was also **AGREED** that Cllr Spearman would liaise with the contractor to establish why it would be costly, and to clearly understand exactly what may be needed.

North Weald Library

At the December 2018 Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting, it was agreed to precept £15,000 towards the cost of securing the Parish Office for a period of 1 year. This was linked to the possibility of having to take over the running of North Weald Library as a result of an ECC consultation. However, Cllr Finch, Leader of Essex County Council, has now publicly stated that no library will close for the next five years. As such, it was **AGREED** that the funds previously precepted for will be placed into an earmarked reserve following the Councils decision at their December meeting to 'maintain the status quo'. It was **AGREED** that in light of the EMR, no further funds were necessary to be precepted for at this time to ensure the security of the Parish Office, or to fund a library service.

Handy Person

Councillors recalled that in 2018/2019 the Council were awarded £7,000 funding via the ECC / EALC Local Services Fund, for a Handy Person to complete various jobs throughout the Parish. Part of this award was on the understanding that the Parish Council would match fund this amount over a three year period. 2020/2021 will be the second year, and as such £2,500 was agreed to be precepted for via this matched funding, with a further £2,000 to be precepted for in 2021/2022.

PA System

It was **AGREED** that the PFO would liaise with Cllr Mulliner as to the specification of the hall's PA system, to ensure the Parish Council purchased a suitable system for its sole use.

CCTV Cemetery

Councillors **AGREED** the cost to install CCTV permanently at the Cemetery was not viable, and funds should not be precepted for at this time.

Security

Councillors **NOTED** that the cost to provide security when required is £18/hour, with a minimum of two officers in attendance and for a minimum of 8 hours. No funds were precepted for at this time.

Press and Publicity

Councillors discussed the press and publicity opportunities for the Council alongside the new social media being organized by Cllr Irvine. It was **AGREED** that monthly inserts of a quarter of a page giving the Councils contact details should go into Village Life each month, and the Councils press officer would continue to be Everything Epping Forest, who would work alongside Cllr Irvine and the Clerk, with the new Facebook page.

Capping Consultation

At this stage, the Parish Council staff have not been notified of any cap imposed on the setting of the precept for Town and Parish Councils.

The final agreed figures for additional items for 2020/2021 were as follows:

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>AGREED Precept Amount</u>	
1	Play Area Emergency Works Fund (Move to EMR). Council felt that the £4,000 sitting in the EMR was sufficient, and no funds were precepted.	£0.00
2	Weald Common (Move to EMR). The average cost to maintain Weald Common is around £3,000 year, with no income. There is just over £10,000 in the EMR, meaning approximately three years costs are covered. Council normally precept around £3,500 per year to cover the cost, however in light of the concerns with the library, this amount was not precepted for in 2019/2020.	£3,000.00

3	Neighbourhood Plan. It is expected that in 2020, the draft plan will be created. It is highly likely that professional planning experts may be needed to assist with both Design Codes, and the creation of the plan itself. There will be further costs with printing the draft plan, as well as the Regulation 14 consultation. No costs were precepted for in 2019/2020.	£8,000.00
4	Revarnish Floor at Parish Hall in Thornwood	£1,500.00
5	Fund for replacement of old pipe between Parish Hall at Thornwood and Allotments. The Parish Council staff have been advised the pipe is extremely old, and if it needs to be replaced in the future it will be costly. These costs would be placed into an earmarked reserve.	£250.00
6	Street Lighting - Rolling Replacement Fund. Based on the average cost of replacing 1 x street Lighting Column of between £4-5,000.	£5,000.00
7	Parish Hall - replacement of internal lighting. Last year, £2000 was moved from the Brent House Farm S106 funds and placed into an EMR for the full replacement of internal lighting at the Parish Hall to LED lighting.	£2,000.00
8	Handyman - Match Fund from Local Services Fund grant award for next two years.	£2,500.00
9	Maintenance of Oak Tree in Hampden Close - Tree is expected to need one cut every 5-10 years, as slow growing. In addition, the Clerk will be trying to source funding from the current owner and from EFDC.	£850.00
10	Tree Works - following the Risk Assessment completed in September, works are required to a number of trees. Three are High Risk, 2 are medium Risk, 1 is low risk.	£2,500.00
11	New PA System for use on Remembrance Sunday. The current system is part owned by NNVH, however is becoming quite old.	£1,500.00
12	Debt of Honour. Discussions are underway regarding the Parish Council taking over the ownership and responsibility of the Debt of Honour. It is known there is some movement in the structure, and the Clerk is liaising with EFDC regarding the paving slabs. £3,000 already sits in the earmarked reserve for any potential works to the Debit of Honour, however it is known that there is some movement in the structure itself.	£2,000.00
13	New gate to Bridleway number 19, running adjacent to North Weald Cemetery. The Clerk recently became aware that the Parish Council owns roughly a 100m stretch of Bridleway no. 19. As such, the Parish Council has responsibility for maintain this path. Consideration to be given to the installation of a suitable gate at this location. Planning Permission for such a structure may be needed from ECC, however it is understood there is no cost to this. There may also be the option of 25% funding via Essex County Council, however this is yet to be confirmed.	£1,500.00
14	Permanent CCTV at the Cemetery in North Weald. At present the Council has temporary CCTV supplied by EFDC. The cost will include full grounds works, CCTV, 10 Gig Simcard allowance (£500 plus VAT per year), plus the cost of having a licence (Approx £2-300 per year). The £3965 plus VAT would be a one off installation cost.	£0.00
Total Additional Items		£ 30,600.00

Earmarked Reserves

Earmarked reserves, which are set aside for specific purposes and for savings for future projects, should be realistic and approved by the council. However, the amount of general reserves should be risk assessed annually and also approved by the council. It is recognised general good practice that the minimum level of General Reserves a Parish Council should hold is between 25%-100% of the precept. Larger councils would be nearer the 25% end. The current predicted figures for 31st March 2020 show that the level of General Reserves (i.e. those reserves that have not been placed into an earmarked fund) is expected to be around 15% of the precept. Technically this would be too low, however the Parish Council has a considerably high level of Earmarked Reserve, greater than 100% of the precept. Council **CONSIDERED** this however no formal decision was made regarding moving any EMR into the General Reserves.

Councillor Mulliner **PROPOSED** the precept for 2020/2021 should be £222,545, equating to a reduction of £0.05p per band D property on 2019/2020, which would be based on the figures supplied by EFDC in December 2019 (Tax Base 2590.50, 2119 electors, 2737 properties). This was **SECONDED** by Cllr Tyler. The Finance and General Purposes Committee therefore **RESOLVED** to put a recommendation to full Council to request a precept of £222,545 for the period 2020/2021.

Meeting closed 8.05pm

Signed

Date