



**MINUTES**

**Meeting:** PARISH COUNCIL

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023

**Time:** 7.00PM

**Venue:** PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON

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**PRESENT:**

**Councillors (8)** Cllr A Buckley (Chairman), Cllr Spearman, Cllr Mrs Hawkins, Cllr Mrs S Jackman MBE, Cllr Tyler\*, Cllr Clegg, Cllr Mrs Grigg, Cllr Stroud

*\*for part of meeting*

**Officers in Attendance (1)**

Adriana Jones – Principal Financial Officer (PFO and Meeting Clerk)

**Members of the Public (1)** – PC Andy Cook

**Members of the Press (1)**

The Chairman thanked Councillors present who had so far financially contributed to the Norway House Christmas Party, advising that Emily and Paul had put a lot of work into creating a wonderful Alice in Wonderland themed event for the children, and the event was a great success.

**C22.156 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (5)**

Apologies received from Cllr Ms Wood, Cllr Bedford, Cllr Etherington, Cllr Blanks, and Cllr Irvine.

**C22.157 OTHER ABSENCES (0)**

None.

**C22.158 MINUTES**

Councillors **AGREED** the Minutes of the Parish Council meetings held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

**C22.159 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Spearman declared a pecuniary interest in any item concerning the Local Plan. Cllr Mrs Grigg declared a personal interest in any item concerning the Bowls club should it arise.

**C22.160 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

PC Cook provided Councillors with an update on crime figures since his attendance at the December Parish Council meeting, stating that crime in the village is not too bad when compared to other parts of the district. Since the last meeting there has been 2 dwelling burglaries, 2 attempted burglaries, 1 theft of a motor vehicle, 3 thefts, and one criminal damage, and one theft of skip from an industrial estate. Cllr Mrs Jackman stated that this seemed a higher than the previous report, to which PC Cook confirmed it was however when you look at the figures against those of other areas in the district such as Chigwell, Epping and Loughton, they are not too bad. The Chairman asked if there were any strike rate figures, to which PC Cook advised that not specifically, however he had been in contact with CID and there were some individual either on bail or remanded in custody. The Chairman advised that local resident would be interested to know this informed. PC Cook advised that there had been a lot of burglaries in the district, specifically jewellery. Cllr Tyler advised that there seemed to be a drop in the number of blue and silver canisters strewn around, albeit there was still some evidence of this near the houses

that back on to Weald Common. Cllr Mrs Jackman enquired as to the rumours that EFDC will be dropping one of the three police officers it currently funds, to which PC stated that he was aware of this, and that the District Council had some financial difficulties at present and that it was inevitable that costs would be cut somewhere. It was **AGREED** that this Council would write to EFDC expressing concern about the possibility of the loss of one EFDC Officer, given the good work they have undertaken in the past and the contribution they make to protecting the community. The meeting clerk advised that the office staff were still trying to find a location to hold an evening Coffee with Cops event, and that she was liaising with PC Cook about this.

The Chairman thanked PC cook for his update, after which PC Cook left the meeting.

#### **C22.161 DEATH OF COUNCILLOR GEORGE MULLINER**

Councillors formally **NOTED** the death of Cllr George Mulliner, who passed away on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2022. George had been a Councillor representing the North Weald Village Ward since 2011, and was an extremely active member of the community, including working tirelessly as a member of the North Weald Village Hall Committee and appointed as Chairman to the NWBPC Environmental Committee. The Chairman stated that George would be terribly missed by everybody who knew him, and that not only was a Councillor but was very popular with the local community. George always has his wife Margaret by his side, and had a great sense of humour, always cracking a joke and lightening some of the heaviest of meetings. George will be particularly missed by all members of the Parish Council. The Chairman advised Councillors of the details of Georges funeral, after which a 1-minute silence was held in remembrance.

Councillors also **NOTED** that upon the death of a Councillor, a Casual Vacancy automatically occurs on the day of death, however if this vacancy occurs within 6 months of the date on which that Councillor would have normally retired, a poll cannot be claimed. North Weald Bassett Parish Council has elections taking place on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023, and as such the Casual Vacancy position that has arisen as a result of George death will remain vacant until the election.

#### **C22.162 BRIEF REPORTS**

The Chairman provided a brief update on the progress at Weald Common, advising that himself and the Senior Administrative Officer met with members of the St Andrews Eco Warrior squad earlier in the day, where 12 children from St Andrews planted trees as part of the Weald Common tree planting project. There was a wide range of ages of children representing the Eco Warriors, with teachers on hand to support them with their task. Photos and a press release were currently being arranged, and this was also to be distributed throughout the school network. Cllr Mrs Jackman stated that it was great for the children to be involved so that they take ownership of this area. Cllr Tyler asked that thanks were formally recorded for the Chairman, as the work involved in arranging and managing this project was immense, but that he had taken this on board and worked tirelessly to secure its successful completion. Councillors agreed. The Chairman advised that 2,500 had so far been planted, and that the planting element of the project finished the following week. There were a number of outstanding actions, including the planting of 6 oak trees provided by a local resident, and the plaques, boards and chairs to be installed. There will be formal opening in the spring.

Cllr Mrs Grigg (Vice Chairman) advised that she was pleased to see a new white lining system installed at the junction of Hastingwood Road and the Harlow roundabout access, and that a car had stopped, for the first time, to let her exit this junction, and that she was thankful this new system was working.

Cllr Clegg asked if there had been an update on the future of the Airfield Site, reminding Councillors that this was raised by Cllr Etherington directed at Cllr Beford at a previous meeting, and that unless he missed it a proper response had not been received. Cllr Tyler stated that whilst he was over the Airfield around Christmas he had heard a rumour that it old HRMC site was going to be used as a waste site. Cllr Mrs Grigg advised that this was mooted many years back and this Council fought very hard to stop this happening, for which there was great local support. It was **AGREED** the meeting clerk would contact Cllr Bedford again to try and address this matter.

The meeting Clerk provided the following update on matters which may be of interest to the Council:

- The Chairman will step in as acting Chairman for the Environmental Committee following the death of Cllr Mulliner, until May.
- There are a number of administrative matters that were currently being dealt with following the death of Cllr Mulliner.
- The Clerk hopes to start a gradual return to work in February.
- The meeting with Countryside Homes originally scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> January has been postponed, however this likely to be rescheduled in mid February. Further details will be made available once this has been agreed.
- The next Planning Committee meeting next will be held Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January.
- The office staff are working hard to ensure the responsibilities and duties of the Parish Council are being maintained in the Clerks absence, however some work may be postponed or deferred if needed.
- The meeting clerk had attended the online Plans East Committee meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> January at which the planning application for Rosario in Thornwood was decided (for 62 homes) and was approved. At this stage, only the site and the access was approved, with all other matters reserved. This will be discussed at Planning Committee meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> January, however the meeting clerk recommended that Councillors took the opportunity to view the webcast of the meeting as there were a number of very interesting elements in terms of community infrastructure and speed limits that Councillors should be aware of. It was **AGREED** the clerk would send out the webcast link to Councillors.

#### **C22.162 INTERIM AUDIT 2022/2023**

Councillors **NOTED** the report of the Interim Internal Audit for 2022/2023, a copy of which was attached to the agenda.

#### **C22.163 LATTON PRIORY - HARLOW GILSTON GARDEN TOWN CONSULTATION**

Councillors recalled that at the 5<sup>th</sup> December Parish Council meeting, discussion took place regarding the current consultation regarding the development proposals for Latton Priory, and it was agreed the PFO would formulate a draft response to this consultation based on discussion points at this meeting, to be considered at this Parish Council meeting. Councillors will recall, Latton Priory is a strategic development site allocated within the submission version of the Epping Forest Local Plan for a minimum of 1,050 new homes. It is located on the southern edge of Harlow, sits within Epping Forest District Council's boundary, and forms part of the new Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. Since the December 2022 meeting, the deadline for responses to this consultation has been extended, with the consultation now ending on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023. Councillors considered the draft response that was attached to the agenda.

Cllr Mrs Grigg confirmed she would support the draft response, as did Cllr Clegg. Cllr Tyler suggested the section on healthcare should be strengthened even further. The draft response as attached to the agenda was **AGREED** as this Councils final response to the consultation, with Councillors stating that it picked out everything that the local community have been concerned about.

The meeting clerk advised that the developers / site promoters had asked this Council for a further meeting in February, where it can address any specific matters this council wishes to raise. Cllr Mrs Grigg stating she was always reluctant to turn down and offer to meet with developers / site promoters for fear this could be used against the council, and a such she would accept the invitation. Cllr Tyler agreed, however suggested they should adopt their own transport policy and arrive on bikes to the meeting. Cllr Clegg asked if in these situations would it be best to provide them with specific questions to focus the meeting on the specific answer this Council wants, to which the meeting clerk confirmed this was a possible way forward. Cllr Tyler asked if the meeting should be open to the public, to which the meeting clerk expressed caution, stating that in such circumstances the meeting could be dominated by members of the public, thereby not allowing sufficient time for Councillors to raise their queries on behalf of the community. It was **AGREED** that the meeting clerk would formulate around 10 question based on the response to the consultation, and that these would be sent to Councillors for comment, and that a meeting with the developer / site promoter should be arranged for February.

## **C22.164 BUDGET / PRECEPT 2023**

Councillors recalled that the Finance and General Purposes (F&GP) Committee meeting scheduled for 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022 at which the Budget/Precept for 2023 was due to be discussed was cancelled due to the poor weather conditions. Attached to the agenda was amended paperwork regarding the Budget. Councillors noted that on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023 an 'Amended Tax Base Notice' was received from EFDC, full details of which were included in the attached paperwork.

Detailed below are the following salient points from the meeting:

### EXPECTED INCOME FOR 22/23 VERSUS BUDGET

The total income for the current financial year is expected to be significantly higher than budgeted for (budgeted £253,440 versus expected £334,215, including precept receipt) – an expected increase of around £80,775. This can be broadly accounted for by a final grant of £40,000 from the HMRC/EFDC regarding the Inland Border Facility (which has been placed into an EMR – the site has now closed), two grants totalling £4,000 secured by the Clerk via the ECC Locality Fund, and expected grant funding of £20,673 for the Weald Common Tree Project. The Parish Hall income is also expected to be higher than budgeted for as a result of diminishing COVID restrictions and what looks to be a return to pre-pandemic hire levels.

### EXPECTED EXPENDITURE FOR 22/23 VERSUS BUDGET

The total expenditure for 22/23 is expected to be approximately 3% over budget. There are fluctuations in the budget for a number of the cost centre codes, broadly as follows:

- Admin code expected to be under budget – main reasons include over budget of Tax and NI costs, underspend for overtime, training, travel and rent.
- Civic and Democratic expected to be over budget – main reasons are costs for Queens Jubilee event and Neighbourhood Plan costs (which are taken directly from EMR and not budgeted for)

- Weald Common expected to be over budget – reason is costs associated with tree planting project.

### COVID

As we entered the 2021/2022 financial year, the potential impact of COVID was a complete unknown which made budgeting extremely difficult. This financial year has seen a slow return to a relatively normal operation of the Parish Council, albeit the Council remains without an office as a direct result of COVID which presents its own challenges.

### STAFFING

Following the Parish Councils decision to continue with the Neighbourhood Plan, the Council **AGREED** that further administrative assistance will be needed in 2023/2024. This matter will go before the Personnel Committee for formal consideration, however approximate figures have been factored into the draft budget for 2023/2024. In addition, for 2022 the Parish Council received funding to undertake specific COVID cleaning for the Parish Hall. This has helped with confidence in hall hiring as can be seen in the income received. The individual who completes this clean also conducts the defibrillator checks throughout the Parish and is on a one year contract, and it was **AGREED** offer a further one year contract starting 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023. Full details of all these matters will be considered at the future meeting of the Personnel Committee.

### INVESTING

Over the last few months of 2022, the issue of investing funds held by the Parish Council has been considered, and it was agreed this should be considered at the time of Budget. After investigation by the Clerk, the PFO, and Cllr Blanks, it is felt that investment in the Churches, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA) Investment Management Limited Public Sector Deposit Fund is currently the best option. Councillors discussed the options, noting that any amount over £85,000 held within the councils bank account was not covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS), and that all sorts of options had been considered, including having additional bank accounts, however banking for Parish Councils was notoriously difficult with many Councils now using Unity Trust Bank. Councillors noted that even if this Council did place monies into the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund, there would still be an element of the Councils finances that remained at risk, albeit an extremely low risk. This is something that would continue to be looked at going forward. The proposal of using the CCLA to invest, for example, £100,000 for a period of 12 months would be a way to trial this method, and if there was a good return, the Council could consider placing additional funds in the future. It was noted that the funds could be withdrawn at any time without penalty, and the only consequence would be the loss of interest. Cllr Clegg stated that he would support investing with the CCLA, being as this has been looked over by Cllr Blanks and the PFO. The meeting clerk advised that ultimately this was an investment scheme. Cllr Mrs Grigg asked if the Auditor had given an opinion, to which the meeting clerk advised that it was the Internal Auditor who first suggested this as being an option to look at, albeit he advised he could not recommend any scheme as it was outside of his remit to do so.

Councillors **AGREED** they would like to invest £100,000 over a period of 12 months, and then review the position in 12 months time.

### WEALD COMMON TREE PLANTING

The Chairman had provided an update on progress with the tree planting project earlier in the meeting, however an update was provided in terms of the funding received. In conjunction with ECC, funding has been sought for this project via the England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO).

It is expected that £10,522 will be awarded via the ECWO grant toward the cost of trees, guards and planting. The trees are expected to be in region of £2,000, 1.2m plastic guards around £7,500, leaving just over £1,000 for the planting. In addition, this Council is expecting to receive £4,060 by way of a 'surplus grant income' or an 'additional benefit'. This has been awarded to use as a result of the project ticking a number of boxes including the proximity of the woodland to houses and the benefit in terms of hydrology (cleaning the water as it runs towards the village). This £4,060 can be spent by the Parish Council in any way the Council agrees, and is not restricted or ringfenced. It is expected that the majority of this money will be put toward the cost of planting and mulch. In addition, this Council has also been awarded £6,090.80 towards maintenance of the area over the next 10 years, roughly equating to just over £600 per year. Councillors were also reminded that within the budget for the current year it was agreed that £3,000 should come from the HMRC funds towards this project, and a further £1,500 from the HMRC funds towards information boards.

#### NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

At the November Parish Council meeting, the general feel was that the Neighbourhood Plan should continue. As at 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022 there was £20,869.17 in the EMR. Councillors **AGREED** these funds were sufficient to cover the Neighbourhood Plan activities over the coming 12 months.

#### WARM ROOMS

This was recently discussed at Parish Council meetings, and in the press, however Councillors felt that at this point in time these were no longer needed, however if necessary should be considered again this time next year.

#### HASTINGWOOD EMR

At the 21 December 2020 F&GP Meeting, it was agreed that £1,500 should be placed in an EMR for various Projects for Hastingwood including 'Everything Council' public event, funding of litter pick equipment, planting along verges, and tidying up of existing sign, new Village Sign, village green area, improving bus stops, notice boards, etc. It was also agreed that any additional funds needed for these works could come from the S106 Hastingwood Fund (possibly up to around £15,000) and that any proposals for works would in the first instance be presented to Council for approval. Cllr Irvine, Hastingwood Ward Councillor, has asked that Council are reminded of this agreement, and that although these monies have not yet been spent this agreement is carried forward. This was **AGREED**.

#### GRANT FUNDING

Yet again the Parish Clerk has been hugely successful in securing a number of grant funds in 2022/2023, including £20,673 for Weald Common, £2,000 for Wheelers Farm Gardens Allotments, £2,000 for the Parish Hall at Thornwood, £500 Microgrant for the Ride London Event and Queens Jubilee, and ensuring the £40,000 from HMRC came to this Council as agreed.

#### EXPECTED PROJECTS FOR 2023/2024

There are currently no expected large scale projects planned for 2023/2024. However, a number of large planning applications are currently being considered or expected to come forward over the coming 12-18 months, for which the Clerk and this Council will be expecting S106 agreements for the benefit of the community.

#### EARMARKED RESERVES

Councillors noted that 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 2023 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 26% of the precept. Whilst this is still relatively low, the Council has an exceptionally high level of Earmarked Reserve, greater than 100% of the precept. Councillors considered the levels of Earmarked Reserves, and **AGREED** they were acceptable.

The following baseline budget figures were **AGREED** for 2023/2024:

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION		
Income		£
		Total Income -
Expenditure		
4001	Staff Salaries	82,988
4003	Superannuation	29,938
4004	Overtime	800
4008	Training	1,000
4009	Travelling Costs	800
4013	Rent	0
4020	Misc. Expenses	1,750
4021	Phone Fax Internet	1,500
4022	Postage	100
4023	Stationery	1,300
4024	Subscriptions	2,000
4025	Insurance	3,200
4028	Books & Publications	50
4029	Photocopier Costs	1,750
4030	Software & Computer Mgt	4,940
4036	Property Maintenance	0
4040	Equipment Maintenance	250
4041	Equipment & Small Tools	150
4051	Bank Charges	100
4053	Loan Capital Repaid (PWLb)	2,210
4054	Loan Interest Paid (PWLb)	184
4056	Professional Fees	0
4057	Audit Fees - External	840
4058	Audit Fees - Internal	950
4070	Tax and NI	21,000
4108	COVID 19	0
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
Total Expenditure		157,800

PRECEPT AND INTEREST		
1190	Interest Received	2,600
Total Income		2,600

CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC		
Income		
1082	Donations Received	0
1084	Sponsorship	0
1178	Grants Received - Other	0

		<b>Total Income</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
4019	Hospitality / Chairman's allowance		<b>150</b>
4020	Misc. Expenses		<b>4,000</b>
4035	Publicity/Press		<b>1,500</b>
4036	Property Maintenance		<b>400</b>
4037	Grounds Maintenance		<b>800</b>
4040	Equipment Maintenance		<b>0</b>
4056	Professional Fees		<b>0</b>
4071	Grants Other		<b>0</b>
4102	Notice Boards		<b>600</b>
4105	Vandalism		<b>0</b>
4108	COVID-19		<b>0</b>
4143	Election Expenses		<b>0</b>
4152	Agreed Additional items		<b>0</b>
4160	Neighbourhood Plan		<b>0</b>
		<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>7,450</b>

<b>REMEMBRANCE DAY</b>			
<b>Income</b>			
1041	Remembrance Day Income		<b>1,100</b>
1084	Sponsorship		<b>200</b>
		<b>Total Income</b>	<b>1,300</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
4019	Hospitality / chairman's Allow		<b>100</b>
4020	Misc. Expenses		<b>100</b>
4142	Remembrance Sunday		<b>1,900</b>
4152	Additional Items		<b>0</b>
		<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>2,100</b>

<b>PARISH HALL AT THORNWOOD</b>			
<b>Income</b>			
1001	Hall Hire - Regular Users		<b>11,000</b>
1002	Hall Hire - Occasional Users		<b>3,000</b>
1003	Hall Hire - Storage charges		<b>350</b>
1004	Hall Hire - Public Liability		<b>500</b>
1007	Hall Hire - Music Licences		<b>100</b>
1080	Miscellaneous Income		<b>0</b>
1082	Donations Received		<b>0</b>
1178	Grants Received Other		<b>0</b>
		<b>Total Income</b>	<b>14,950</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
4001	Staff Salaries		<b>6,000</b>
4003	Superannuation		<b>0</b>
4004	Overtime		<b>500</b>
4014	Utilities		<b>8,000</b>
4016	Cleaning Materials		<b>600</b>
4020	Misc. Expenses		<b>2,000</b>
4026	Music Licence		<b>150</b>
4036	Property Maintenance		<b>2,300</b>
4037	Grounds Maintenance		<b>1,500</b>



4040	Equipment Maintenance	500
4041	Equipment & Small Tools	0
4049	Paladin Hire	1,000
4070	Tax and NI	1,100
4105	Vandalism	0
4108	COVID 19	0
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>23,650</b>

<b>CEMETERY</b>		
<b>Income</b>		
1011	Cemetery Interment Fees	4,500
1012	Cemetery Memorial Fees	1,500
1013	Cemetery GOR Purchase	0
1015	Cemetery Transfers	0
1019	Miscellaneous Income	0
1083	Cemetery Plot Purchase	2,500
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>8,500</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
4014	Utilities	150
4020	Misc. Expenses	500
4036	Property Maintenance	500
4037	Grounds Maintenance	6,250
4043	Grave Digging	1,500
4049	Paladin Hire	750
4073	Cemetery Memorial costs	1,300
4105	Vandalism	0
4152	Agreed Additional Items	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>10,950</b>

<b>WEALD COMMON</b>		
<b>Income</b>		
1178	Grants Received	0
<b>Income</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
4020	Mis Expenses	0
4036	Property Maintenance	0
4037	Grounds Maintenance	0
4064	Weald Com Play Area	4,000
4074	Weald Common Grounds Maint	4,500
1405	Vandalism	0
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>8,500</b>

<b>OPEN SPACES</b>		
<b>Income</b>		
1031	Dog Bin Recharge Income	520
1084	Sponsorship	500
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>1,020</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
4008	Training	0
4020	Misc. Expenses	4,500

4036	Property Maintenance	500
4037	Grounds Maintenance	600
4038	Play Area Equipment	0
4040	Equipment Maintenance	0
4066	Thornwood Play Area	3,000
4104	Bus Shelters	100
4105	Vandalism	0
4106	Dog Waste Bins	4,420
4107	Street Signs & Furniture	0
4108	COVID 19	200
4148	Bluemans End Rental	300
4149	Bluemans End Maintenance	1,500
4150	Norwegian Mem Grnds Maint	1,100
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
4155	Pike Way	1,200
4156	Village Sign	800
4157	Thornwood Common	2,200
4159	SGL Play Area	2,000
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>22,420</b>

<b>STREET LIGHTING</b>		
<b>Income</b>		
	Total Income	0
<b>Expenditure</b>		
4068	Street Lighting Maintenance	4,700
4072	Street Lighting Electricity	7,500
4105	Vandalism	0
4152	Agreed Additional items	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>12,200</b>

<b>ALLOTMENTS</b>		
<b>Income</b>		
1021	Allotment Rents	2,600
1022	Allotment Key Deposits	0
1080	Mis Inc	0
1178	Grants Received	0
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>2,600</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
4014	Utilities	1,100
4020	Misc. Expenses	1,200
4036	Property Maintenance	500
4037	Grounds Maintenance	3,500
4040	Equipment Maintenance	350
4041	Equipment and small tools	0
4152	Agreed Additional Items	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>6,650</b>

<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£30,970</b>
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<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£251,720</b>
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Councillors **AGREED** the following additional items:

<u>Item</u>	<b>Precept Amount</b>	<b>From Earmarked Reserve</b>
Play Area Emergency Works Fund (Move to EMR). As at 1/12/22, this EMR stands at £3,000. This fund is used to cover any unanticipated essential safety works to the three play areas in the Parish. Councillors <b>AGREED</b> to precept £1,000 to place into this fund.	£1,000.00	
The Higham View wooden bridge is showing signs of wear on the main beams and floor connection points. This bridge was originally installed by Countrycare and is wooden in build with steps going up towards Weald Common. The Parish Councils footpath officer has advised that ECC like metal bridges to be installed. Consideration should be given to replacing this bridge with a more sturdy structure less likely to succumb to inclement weather. Councillors <b>AGREED</b> that funds to replace this bridge should come from the HMRC EMR held, but that a further quote from Countrycare should be obtained.		£1,208.00
Councillors recalled there is a memorial located on North Weald Airfield (C21.080 Council minute reference refers). This was installed in 2012 as a Memorial to the Norwegians and consists of small stone with a plaque on the Revetment near to the Squadron. Historically nobody has been appointed to maintain the Memorial, and since the time of the original dedication the area has become overgrown and unkept. It is understood that the Squadron has agreed to maintain this area including the memorial, and were hoping to fix some of the brickwork in the surrounding areas. The squadron has asked if the Parish Council would be willing to provide a contribution towards this. Discussion took place as to the state of this area, with both the Chairman and Cllr Spearman stating that they felt it would be good money after bad, as although the memorial stone itself may be salvaged, they felt the actual revetment area was in such a state of bad repair, it could not be made good. Councillors discussed if it would in fact be better to move this memorial stone to another part of the airfield, suggesting somewhere near the Hurricane at the main entrance. However, prior to this it should be establish if here was a specific reason as to if the memorial <b>MUST</b> be located on this revetment, as there could be some historical significance that would be lost in the stone was moved. It was therefore <b>AGREED</b> that discussions should take place with the airfield manager as to why the memorial was located at this position, and if there was a possibility it could be moved. If this was feasible, then £500 should be taken from the HMRC funds to put towards relocating this memorial to a more prominent position where the public were more likely to see it.		£500.00

<p>The Thornwood Common Play Area includes a small picnic bench, made with a metal frame and wooden top. This has been in situ for over 15 years. The top was replaced roughly three years ago, however the frame is now showing signs of wear and cracking. Councillors AGREED this bench should be replaced, however they were conscious of the S106 funds expected to be received from the Rosario development in Thornwood, along with the other developments in Thornwood that were included in the Local Plan. It was AGREED that £1,000 should be earmarked for the replacement of this bench from the HMRC funds, however, subject to the bench remaining a low risk on play area inspection reports, any replacement should be postponed until later in 2023, when at which time it was hoped that more information would be available on S106 funding.</p>		£1,000.00
<p>Street Lighting - Rolling Replacement Fund. Based on the average cost of replacing 1 x street Lighting Column of between £4-5,000. As at 1/12/22 this EMR stands at £16,295 - enough to replace roughly three street lights.</p>	£5,000.00	
<p>Request from Essex &amp; Herts Air Ambulance for donation.</p>		£200.00
<p>The two allotment wardens for North Weald Allotments have worked extremely hard managing the sites and have requested consideration is given to two items. The first - following the theft of a strimmer from the WFG garage, it is suggested to fit a cage which covers the full width and height with 2 doors which can be locked. The cage would allow the wardens to store the communal lawn mower and trimmer plus the fuel, rolls of mypex, netting etc. They could then control who uses what and when and keep these items safe and secure. The cost to fabricate such a cage is £1356.00 inc VAT to supply and fit. The second item is the purchase of scaffold poles in order to construct a kite system on the communal plot used and available to all members of the allotments. This will provide much needed shade in the summer. The system will be constructed by the two wardens. They kites themselves have already been purchased. Councillors asked for further details regarding the theft, and what having a cage will do to deter this, to which the meeting clerk advised that it would allow the wardens to have control over storage of communal items and who has access to them. Councillors <b>AGREED</b> to these funds, however asked that a system of management of communal items is put in place.</p>	£1,500.00	

<p>Allotments - all of this Councils allotment sites have water tanks. These tanks are extremely old and prone to regular leaks and damage with numerous repairs taking place each year at a cost to the Council. The PFO is scheduled to meet with the area representative of National Association of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners regarding a way to resolve this, however it has been suggested that all these tanks are replaced with insulated upstand pipe housing. There are around 15 tanks across all three sites. These are significant works, however would ensure the Council it meeting its obligations under H&amp;S, as well as assisting with water conservation and reducing repair cost for the future. Cllr Tyler expressed concern as to the cost of this idea when considering the number of allotment plots in the parish. Cllr Clegg asked how many plots there was, to which the meeting clerk advised roughly 75. She also pointed out that during COVID the allotment were a godsend for many, and that over the years there had been very little investment in the allotments. Councillors <b>AGREED</b> they were happy to precept for £5,000 towards the future cost of these works, however asked that the following actions / issues be considered / take place prior to deciding how to progress: Liaison with Allotment holders at their Annual Meeting about the idea, site surveys to establish how many would be needed, liaison with other allotment sites who may have installed these upstand pipes and establish how successful they have been or any drawbacks, consideration of any potential issues of friction with tenants when it comes to the use of hoses, if there should be an increase in allotment rent to cover the cost, sourcing of grant funding to fund the project including from any water companies, effect on water flow, and liaison with NSALG for advice. Cllr Spearman advised that in the near future he would have a lot of galvanised iron piping and taps that could perhaps be used for this project thus presenting a cost saving - iron piping being better than plastic and copper. This would be a long term project.</p>	£5,000.00	
<p>The Kings Coronation is expected to take place on Saturday 6th May. This is expected to be a slimmed down coronation. It was <b>AGREED</b> to take £1,000 from the HMRC fund towards any local groups running community events that may be taking place. This would be decided by way of applications to the Parish Council.</p>		£1,000.00
<p>Over the past 12 months the dog bin at Bluemans End Recreation Field has been used as a rubbish bin. It is noted there is no rubbish bin on the field. Councillors <b>AGREED</b> to the installation of a new rubbish bin.</p>	£300.00	
<b>Total Additional Items</b>	<b>£12,800.00</b>	<b>£3,908.00</b>

Councillors noted that last year, the Parish Council element of the Precept for a band D property was £88.49/year (£1.70 a week). The calculation to get to this is the amount the Council request in precept divided by the tax base (no. of houses EFDC are expecting to collect council tax from), which for last year was as follows:

$$£229,766 / 2596.60 = £88.49$$

After initially receiving notification from EFDC on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2022 that the tax base for 2023/2024 had increased to 2,633.80, and AMENDMENT to this was received on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022 stating that following receipt of updated intelligence on the potential impact of the current economic crisis, the tax base had been adjusted and was now 2,611.50. If the Parish Council wishes to show a NIL increase in the Parish Council element of Council tax for next year, the maximum amount the Council can demand of EFDC in terms of precept would be £231,084:

$$£231,084 / 2,611.50 = £88.49$$

Councillors discussed the possible options in front of this Council in terms of precept increases. Councillors discussed the current economic climate, and the pressures being faced by local residents in terms of high energy and fuel costs, and that this would undoubtedly have a bearing on their decision. Cllr Spearman **PROPOSED** a NIL increase in the precept for 2023/2024, suggesting it be set at £231,084. This was **SECONDED** by Cllr Mrs Grigg. A vote was taken, the result of which was Unanimous. It was therefore **AGREED** that the precept for 2023/2024 would be £231,034, and that this demand would be sent to EFDC by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023.

Meeting closed

Signed .....

Date .....