

SHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 26th October 2023 at Shorne Village Hall

PRESENT

Mr R Lane (Chairman)
Mr R Theobald (Vice-Chair)
Mrs S Lindley
Ms P Clifton
Mr J Bugg
Mr R Hardy
Mrs L Williams
Mr T Rochard-Pullen
Mrs D Salmon (Parish Clerk)

APOLOGIES

Mr C Rea

1. To receive any declarations of interest for any items on the agenda:

None

2. To review the External Audit Report and outstanding balances:

A paper was submitted with the agenda. Both the internal and external auditors have commented on our cash reserves. The balance at the beginning of the year was £119,000, up from £71,000 in 2021. There are a number of reasons for this set out in the paper, but they include increases in the precept, completion of loan repayments, success in securing grant funding, and delays in carrying out capital expenditure.

Mr Lane advised that it is important that we carry out this year's budgeted expenditure, and there is some capacity for further expenditure. We should also take these balances into consideration when setting our budget and precept, and not include unspecified contingencies or speculative provisions in our budgets and forecasts.

3. Review of 2023/2024 half-yearly expenditure:

The Clerk presented a report on expenditure for the first half of the year compared with the estimates. It was noted that the total precept expenditure for the first six months of the year to 30th September 2023 was **£15,141.57**. The non-precept expenditure for Crabbles Bottom was £1,945.00. See attached schedule.

4. Review of anticipated expenditure and full year estimate for 2023/2024, including:

It was noted that the salary scales are currently under review, to be backdated to 1st April. The Employers' representatives have offered an increase of £1 per hour, which equates to £65 per month, which has not been accepted. The increase and backpay will be incurred during the second half of the year and is included in the forecast.

Mr Lane said that we need to be realistic in our second half forecasts, and not include provisions and contingencies that are unlikely to be incurred.

4.1 Accruals and provisions for repairs and renewals:

The amounts set aside for future renewals of assets were identified and considered to be reasonable. A discussion took place on whether these accruals should be held in separate bank accounts or just identified separately. It was agreed that whilst the setting aside of these accruals does not constitute expenditure, it should be included in our budgeting.

Mr Bugg raised a question regarding the ultimate ownership of the Village Hall, and whether the Parish Council should be budgeting for future major repairs or renewals. It was agreed that Mr Bugg will research this further for clarification.

4.2 Consideration of grants and donations:

Mrs Salmon has previously circulated grant applications from BEAMS (a small local charity supporting disabled children and their families) and from Shorne Village Hall for support towards redecorating costs. Members discussed other charitable donations for local organisations. It was agreed to recommend a grant of £500 to BEAMS, £500 to the Village Hall, and to make a £300 donation to Kent Air Ambulance, £100 to the Pop Up café, and £100 to the Church.

4.3 Approval of contractor for car park resurfacing:

A paper was circulated in advance. 4 quotations have been received, all within budget, but each to varying specifications. There is no reason why any one of the contractors should not be able to carry out the work satisfactorily. Members agreed to delegate authority to one or more members to enter into discussions with one or more contractors and to select the preferred contractor, for subsequent ratification by the Council. Mr Bugg will action this. Mr Theobald offered to assist if needed.

4.4 Other expenditure proposals for 2023/2024:

- a) Quotations have been requested for resurfacing the car park borders and it is anticipated that the work will be carried out during this financial year.
- b) Mr Lane requested approval for the replacement car park sign (estimate £190). This was approved.
- c) Mr Lane requested approval for 2 file storage cabinets to assist with storage of Council items in the Village Hall (estimate £250+VAT). This was approved.
- d) It was proposed to replace the noticeboard at Shorne Crossroads (estimate £1,000 and included in the budget). This was approved.
- e) Mrs Williams raised the possibility of obtaining better CCTV cameras to combat fly tipping in Shorne Ifield Road towards Thong. Mrs Williams was requested to look into the cost of suitable equipment and to make a recommendation.

4.5 Consideration of 'Scribe' financial reporting:

The internal auditor has recommended that the Council considers purchasing an industry specific accounting package. Mrs Salmon has researched options available and recommends that the Council proceeds with Scribe due to the quality of the package, the support provided, and the annual cost, and this has been included in the forecast. This was approved.

It was noted that the precept expenditure for the second half of 2023/24 is estimated to be £42,068.05 plus £3,600 accruals for future renewals of assets. The full year

precept expenditure is estimated to be **£57,209.62** plus £3,600 accruals for future renewals of assets. This includes £5,000 for Shorne West AED, paid for by a grant award. See attached schedule.

For Crabbles Bottom (non-precept expenditure), costs to date amount to £1,945.00. The expenditure during the second half of the year is expected to amount to £2,205.00, making a full year cost of £4,150.00.

5 Consideration of long-term expenditure:

Mr Lane noted that if there are no more major items left on the longer term expenditure “wish list” it may be difficult to justify maintaining the precept at its current level.

It was noted that Mr Rea has previously suggested adult gym equipment. The possibility of additions to the children’s play equipment was raised, but Members felt it was unnecessary. Mr Rochard-Pullen suggested that we might ask parishioners what they would like to see, but Mr Lane felt that it would be difficult to get consensus of opinion unless recommended proposals were put forward. Mrs Lindley suggested that it would be appropriate to include a questionnaire in the next Annual Report.

6. Consideration of provisions and one-off major items for 2024/2025:

Mr Bugg raised the possibility of planters around the village, similar to other local villages. Mr Lane raised the possibility of a further, more in-depth clean and small restoration project of the War Memorial. Members discussed the possibility of assisting the Village Hall with some larger renovation projects.

7. Setting of budget for 2024/2025:

It was noted that the budget for 2024/25 amounted to £40,160, including £3,600 accruals to be set aside for future capital renewals, and including an extra £10,000 set aside for special grants. Based on this, it would be difficult to justify maintaining the precept at its current level of £46,410 unless further items of expenditure could be identified. It was acknowledged that it is difficult to budget for highways projects as we do not know what KCC will permit, but we have sufficient reserves to accommodate suitable highway projects or other projects should this be needed.

8. Setting of annual precept for 2024/2025:

The current precept is £46,410. Expenditure has been less than income in recent years, and our reserves have been increasing. Mr Lane considered that there should be no increase to our precept this year, and we should even consider reducing the precept if it is unlikely that our costs will meet the current precept level of £46,410, otherwise our reserves will increase further. Members considered that the precept should not be reduced, but to recommend that the precept should be frozen at £46,410 for 2024/2025. Mrs Lindley pointed out that, due to inflation, by freezing the precept the Council is in fact reducing the income in real terms.

[Post Meeting Note: The Budget and Precept were subsequently amended at the Parish Council meeting held on 23rd November 2023.]

9. Approval of Internal Auditor:

Mrs Salmon has contacted Martin Fielder, an internal auditor recommended by a neighbouring Parish Council, and Mr Fielder has confirmed his availability for April 2024. The cost was acceptable and it was agreed to proceed with Martin Fielder.

10. Any matters arising from Committee and Members:

Mr Lane reminded all members to review the draft Standing Orders, Asset Register, Risk Register, and Financial Regulations.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 22:25.

Signed Mr Lane:..... Dated:.....

[Please note that this budget was subsequently amended at the Parish Council meeting held on 23rd November 2023]

| SHORNE PARISH COUNCIL - 2023/24 Estimates and 2024/25 Budget | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| INCOME | | | | | |
| Precept | | £46,410.00 | | | |
| Grants & Donations (Kent Comm Fund – AED) | | £5,021.00 | | | |
| Misc (eg sale of mugs, coins, etc) | | £340.00 | | | |
| CCLA Investment | | £1,763.28 | | | |
| Scouts | | £0.05 | | | |
| Total inc Grants/Donations & Precept | | £53,534.33 | | | |
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| EXPENDITURE | Budgeted | At 30/09/23 | Oct-Mar Est | Total Est | Budget 24/25 |
| Clerk's Salary Gross (incl NI & pension) | £14,000.00 | £6,638.22 | £6,088.90 | £12,727.12 | £13,500.00 |
| Clerk's Allowances | | £26.00 | £156.00 | £182.00 | £312.00 |
| Courses for Clerk & Conf. Fees | £500.00 | £210.00 | £120.00 | £330.00 | £500.00 |
| Cllrs Expenses and Cllrs/Clerks Travel | £100.00 | £77.37 | £22.63 | £100.00 | £100.00 |
| Payroll Costs | £250.00 | £20.48 | £204.52 | £225.00 | £250.00 |
| Scribe | | | £657.00 | £657.00 | £408.00 |
| External Audit Mazars | £300.00 | £0.00 | £315.00 | £315.00 | £325.00 |
| Civic Expenses & Flowers | £100.00 | £75.00 | £0.00 | £75.00 | £100.00 |
| Contribution towards Clerk's IT equipment | £300.00 | £325.00 | £150.00 | £475.00 | £300.00 |
| Data Protection ICO | £35.00 | £35.00 | £0.00 | £35.00 | £35.00 |
| Hire of Hall and Room/Zoom | £600.00 | £182.00 | £140.00 | £322.00 | £350.00 |
| Insurance | £700.00 | £598.99 | £0.00 | £598.99 | £650.00 |
| Internal Audit | £250.00 | £615.50 | £0.00 | £615.50 | £90.00 |
| Legal Fees | £500.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| Office, Stationery, Drop in sessions & Postage | £300.00 | £104.74 | £100.00 | £204.74 | £80.00 |
| one.com e-mail domain | £250.00 | £211.35 | £0.00 | £211.35 | £250.00 |
| Printing – Leaflets | £100.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| Printing Parish Report | £700.00 | £1,074.00 | £0.00 | £1,074.00 | £1,100.00 |
| Publications (Council Books) | £60.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| Refreshments Parish Assembly/Christmas | £100.00 | £163.05 | £75.00 | £238.05 | £200.00 |
| Subscriptions Open Space, SLCC, KALC, CPRE | £1,200.00 | £873.65 | £225.00 | £1,098.65 | £1,200.00 |

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| Tel/Broadband | £400.00 | £110.21 | £60.00 | £170.21 | £120.00 |
| Website | £500.00 | £0.00 | £200.00 | £200.00 | £250.00 |
| Grants/Donations | £1,000.00 | £0.00 | £1,500.00 | £1,500.00 | £1,500.00 |
| Special Grants | £10,000.00 | | | | £10,000.00 |
| Church Clock | £0.00 | £250.00 | £0.00 | £250.00 | £250.00 |
| Lower Thames Crossing | £500.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| Coronation (including donations made) | £1,000.00 | £976.60 | £0.00 | £976.60 | £0.00 |
| British Legion | £70.00 | £0.00 | £40.00 | £40.00 | £40.00 |
| Election fees for 2023 | £200.00 | £300.80 | £0.00 | £300.80 | £0.00 |
| Subtotal General Expenditure | £24,015.00 | £12,867.96 | £10,054.05 | £22,922.01 | £31,910.00 |
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| Planning & Highways (see below) | £2,500.00 | | | | |
| Public Consultation | 0 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | |
| Signage on Roads | 0 | £0.00 | £60.00 | £60.00 | |
| Traffic Monitoring The Street | 0 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | |
| Other | 0 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | |
| Subtotal Planning & Highways | £2,500.00 | £0.00 | £60.00 | £60.00 | £2,500.00 |
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| Footpaths, Properties and Greens (see below) | | | | | |
| Village Hall Car Park (shrub maintenance) | £160.00 | £160.00 | £0.00 | £160.00 | £180.00 |
| Butt/Bollards - General Maintenance | £500.00 | £0.00 | £250.00 | £250.00 | £500.00 |
| Contingency | £1,000.00 | £77.95 | £0.00 | £77.95 | £0.00 |
| Noticeboard replacement | £1,000.00 | £0.00 | £1,000.00 | £1,000.00 | £0.00 |
| Play area and annual maintenance | £0.00 | £0.00 | £250.00 | £250.00 | £0.00 |
| Shorne Rec maintenance | £100.00 | £54.66 | £0.00 | £54.66 | £0.00 |
| Signs | £100.00 | £0.00 | £190.00 | £190.00 | £0.00 |
| Supplementary verge cutting | £600.00 | £500.00 | £0.00 | £500.00 | £575.00 |
| Tree survey | £350.00 | £0.00 | £245.00 | £245.00 | £295.00 |
| Tree remedial work | £1,000.00 | £0.00 | £500.00 | £500.00 | £600.00 |
| Subtotal Footpaths, Properties & Greens | £4,810.00 | £792.61 | £2,435.00 | £3,227.61 | £2,150.00 |

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| Capital Renewals Funds (see below) | | | | | |
| Car Park remedial fund provision | £1,000.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £1,000.00 |
| CCTV Maintenance | £300.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £300.00 |
| Defibrillator AED | £200.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £200.00 |
| SID | £500.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £500.00 |
| Play Area | £1,500.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £1,500.00 |
| Speed Watch | £100.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £100.00 |
| Subtotal Capital Renewals Funds | £3,600.00 | £0.00 | £3,600.00 | £3,600.00 | £3,600.00 |
| | | | | | |
| SUBTOTAL | £34,925.00 | £13,660.57 | £16,149.05 | £29,809.62 | £40,160.00 |
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| Capital Projects (see below) | | | | | |
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| Bus Shelters (Note - £10,000 in 2021/22 budget) | £0.00 | £0.00 | £9,000.00 | £9,000.00 | |
| Car Park resurfacing & border remodelling | £20,000.00 | £0.00 | £17,000.00 | £17,000.00 | |
| *AED Shorne West. Although not formally budgeted, a sum | *See note | £1,481.00 | £3,519.00 | £5,000.00 | |
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| TOTAL PRECEPT EXPENDITURE | £54,925.00 | £15,141.57 | £45,668.05 | £60,809.62 | |
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| 2023/24 Precept Request | £46,410.00 | | | | |
| Expenditure from Reserves | £8,515.00 | | | | |
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| Crabbles Bottom (Non-precept expenditure): | | | | | |
| Footpaths, Meadow & Bridleway (Gozzett) | £3,000.00 | £1,945.00 | £905.00 | £2,850.00 | |
| Other (branch removals, bramble removal, etc) | - | £0.00 | £300.00 | £300.00 | |
| Fencing repairs | £1,000.00 | £0.00 | £1,000.00 | £1,000.00 | |
| Other (Signage, sundry items) | £500.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | |
| Total Crabbles Bottom | £4,500.00 | £1,945.00 | £2,205.00 | £4,150.00 | |
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*Please note this spreadsheet does not show VAT reclaim or expenditure.