

Budget working party notes from the meeting held on 28th November

Present: John Ambrose, Roy Fisk, Max Pittman and the Clerk

The attached draft budget was discussed in great detail at the Working Party Meeting. The document shows the budget and outturn for 21/22, the budget and projected outturn for 22/23 (the current year) and a proposed budget for 23/24. This last column is highlighted in light green for clarity.

An estimate has been made for the eco lighting work. A bill for 85% of the cost of the work has been received. The remaining commitment is yet to be confirmed. The cost of this will come from reserves, including the CIL funding which has been carried forward.

The budget plan also includes several tabs at the bottom of the spreadsheet, including salary information and a list of regular contractors and suppliers, which Council is asked to review.

Council is asked to approve the draft budget at the meeting to be held on 19th December.

Subscriptions and Memberships: this is a straightforward part of the budget: it is proposed that we continue with the current subscriptions. Both SALC and SLCC offer valuable advice and training for Councils and Clerks. The other subscriptions are historical.

Grants and Donations: despite quite extensive advertising on noticeboards, website, facebook, etc. there have been few applications for funding and no new applications. Based on the applications received, it was agreed to continue with the grants to the PCC (£500), SARS (£25), First Responders (£100), Holbrook Academy (£30 for their awards evening) Holbrook Helpers (£500) and the Village Hall (£300). There was no application from the Repair Café or Holbrook Mums and Toddler Group. Cllr Fisk did not take part in the discussion re Holbrook Helpers, due to his involvement with the committee.

Salaries and Expenses: The Clerk's contract includes an estimated 3% increase, but it has taken until November 22 for a pay agreement to be agreed for the 22/23 financial year, so it is, at this stage, a guess. The backdated increase is included in the outturn for 22/23. The Working Group agreed to add an incremental progression, which would cost an additional 24p per hour. This has been included in the calculations.

Councillors' expenses have been left the same: The assumption is that there will be no change to the Clerk's homeworking allowance and the Chairman's allowance. The minimum wage will increase to £10.42 so the Community Caretaker's salary has been calculated on that basis. The grant from BDC's Cleansing Department will offset this salary. The Community Caretaker is also entitled to an expense allowance. However, as we have just employed a new Community Caretaker, costs have been included in the estimated outturn for 22/23 for new PPE.

SALC payroll charges have been increased by 3% which has not been confirmed.

Asset Maintenance and Other Works: Footway lighting charges decreased last year. A notification from SCC has been received to suggest an increase of 12%-20% be included for 23/24, although there was a proviso in the letter to suggest changing to LED would offset the highest increase. At the moment an increase of 20% on actuals for 22/23 has been included as the worst-case scenario.

Grass cutting is underspent this year, although there are outstanding invoices to come. The proposed budgets have been reduced for 23/24, for all but the contract with SCC. Reade Field Other Maintenance: a small budget has been included for next year. £3,000 has been included for Playground Renewals and Maintenance, to upgrade/repair some of the items showing signs of wear and tear.

The locality grant for the CSHG has been unspent so has been carried forward. The original grant application included the cost of grit bins which have been installed.

Administration: Most of these are self-explanatory and are budgeted at similar levels as last year. The courses and training budget, however, has been reduced as CILCA was a major part of the 21/22 budget. Election costs are estimated at £1870, which would be the cost if the Parish Council had more candidates than councillor vacancies and if it were to be held jointly with the District Council elections. If the Parish Council election is uncontested, the cost is likely to be £150.00. If the election is uncontested, then the surplus will be put in the reserves for future election costs.

Neighbourhood plan: a grant of £4,500 was received in 21/22 for the consultant. Last November when the 22/23 budget was prepared, it was anticipated that the full cost of the consultant would be spent. However, this was not the case and the surplus grant had to be repaid to Groundwork UK. There are still fees outstanding for the consultant, which have been included in the estimated outturn for this year.

A further £10,000 is included towards the pavilion. Currently there is £9,000 being held in reserves from previous years, plus a further 10,000 from 22/23 and £10,000 from 23/24. No further funds have been allocated to reserves for the bus shelters.

No expenditure has been included for the Village Recorder

The lottery expenditure is based on this year's total.

INCOME

There is no anticipated grant funding for next year at the moment, with the exception of the grant for the Community Caretaker. The VAT claim is estimated and will include a substantial VAT claim for the eco lighting project

There might be a slight increase in interest for the NSI account, with the increase in interest rates.

PRECEPT

In order to calculate the precept, the working group considered the draft budget, income and expenditure totals, plus the reserves. The indicative Tax Base from Babergh is 719.12 (a slight decrease from 22/23 (722.34)). If the council requests the

same precept as last year (£31,930), Band D council tax will be £44.40 (£44.20 in 22/23), which would represent an increase of 0.45%

Following a discussion, it was agreed to keep the precept the same as 22/23.

The **Reserves** tab will be populated once the budget is agreed and the outturn figure for the end of the year is known, but it is anticipated that it will reduce, due to the cost of the eco lighting.

Parish Councils the size of Holbrook are recommended to carry no more than twice the precept in reserves.