

**CHARLWOOD PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN THE PAVILION ON
Tuesday, 16TH October 2024
5:30PM**

PRESENT

Chair – Cllr Scott

Present: Cllrs Crofts, Evans, Stacey

In attendance: J Coulthard (Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer (RFO)), 2 x Residents

315/24	1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
	Apologies received and accepted from Cllrs Hill and McCorquodale.	
316/24	2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
317/24	<p>None</p> <p>3. DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2025/26 FINANCIAL YEAR</p> <p>3.1 Review of draft budget with proposals from Committees incorporated.</p> <p>The Clerk/RFO talked through the draft budget document circulated to Cllrs prior to the meeting and explained the methodology for calculating the draft:</p> <p>All budget lines where no input was received from committees in terms of budget considerations, apart from Payroll (Salary & Pensions) had been increased in line with the prevailing rate of inflation as at September 2024 i.e. 2.2% (rate of inflation excluding housing costs).</p> <p>The Payroll (Salary & Pensions) budget line had been increased by 4.5% in anticipation of the government's pay award for local government employees which is still currently under negotiation but is likely to be back dated to April 2024.</p> <p>Budget lines where input was received from committees had been adjusted to accommodate all requests.</p> <p>The Clerk/RFO highlighted that if all requests from Committees were accepted and remained in budget, the Parish Council's general reserves would be used up completely unless the budget for 2024/25 was not spent in its entirety and the remainder carried over to the 2025/26 general reserve. The Clerk/RFO explained that at the end of 2023/24 c. £28K of the budget had not been spent and was carried over to this year. Based on the current run rate, it was likely that c £20K of this year's budget would remain unspent. If this happened the PC would have a general reserve of c. £20K which would mean the need for very tight budget management in 2025/26 if the PC wished to preserve its earmarked reserves.</p> <p>3.2 Consideration of which proposals to recommend for approval in the final draft budget.</p> <p>The Finance Committee reviewed each budget line carefully considering whether savings or reductions could be made, which requests from committees could be included and where budget lines may need to be increased. It was agreed to make the following recommendations to full Parish Council for approval.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Precept be increased by 2.5% vs 2024/25. Cllrs were mindful of an increase impacting residents Council Tax however, it was felt and an increase was necessary to account for inflation and the fact that the PC had not increased the Precept for the past year 24/25. 	

- More advertising that the Pavilion is for hire and that residents get discount in order to boost income. It was noted that income from lettings had fallen by £1K year to date vs. last year.
- Pavilion Maintenance - Cllrs agreed to recommend to include S&A requirement to add to the Pavilion Maintenance budget line, however reduced the amount from £4.5K to £3.5K.
- Recreation Ground - There was some confusion over whether S&A had asked for budget for a new mower. However, Cllr Stacey confirmed a new mower was not needed and it was agreed to recommend adding £500 for servicing of mower.
- Millenium Field – Cllrs agreed to increase the budget line by £3.6K to allow for tree work and grass cutting.
- Misc. Maintenance & Repairs – Cllrs agreed to recommend an increase of £3K as per S&A request.
- The Withey – Cllrs agreed to recommend a £2.5K increase to allow for the purchase of a Basket Swing
- Hookwood Playground – Cllrs agreed to recommend reducing this budget line to make it equal with the Charlwood Playground budget line.
- Subscriptions – Cllrs agreed to recommend the increase suggested by the S&A Committee and include extra for a subscription to Parish on-line est. £400 and in consideration of the expected increase in the SALC/NALC subscription.
- Professional Fees – Cllrs agreed to recommend acceptance of the Planning Committee’s request to make the budget line £10K and to add £500 for legal representation for Leases.
- Insurance – Cllrs agreed to recommend the increase proposed by the Clerk/RFO which reflected reality and a potential increase in cover.
- Payroll (Salary & Pensions) – Cllrs agreed to recommend the increase proposed by the Clerk/RFO.
- Sundries – Cllrs agreed to recommend adding £1,000 to the budget line for S&SEiB to cover both Charlwood and Hookwood.
- Grants – Cllrs agreed to recommend increasing the budget line to £5K and not the £10K proposed by S&A due to the need to reign in the budget.
- Newsletter – Cllrs agreed to recommend increasing the budget line to £1.2K to allow for printing 2 x Newsletters and the associated Royal Mail costs for posting to outlying properties.
- Websites – The domain name ‘Charlwood Parish’ appeared to have been retained via a third party. It as not used or updated by the PC, therefore the Committee recommended the PC cease involvement.
- Footpath – The Committee recommended changing the heading to ‘Footpath Clean and Pavement’.

It was acknowledged that although these changes reduced the draft budget dramatically, there would still need to be a close eye kept on the general reserves and very tight management of the budget for 2025/26.

3.3 To agree the final draft budget to recommend to full Parish Council for approval.

The Clerk/RFO had made all the changes above to the draft during the meeting and advised Cllrs of the impact. **IT WAS AGREED** to recommend the revised draft budget for approval by the full Parish Council.

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4. PRECEPT

4.1 To agree the Precept recommendation for full Parish Council approval. Cllrs agreed to recommend a 2.5% increase in the Precept taking it to £78,413 vs £76,500 for 2024/25.

319/24	<p>5. MATTERS FOR REPORTING OR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precept Recommendation for 2025/26 to be on the agenda for the full Parish Council meeting of the 21st October for consideration and agreement by the full Parish Council. • Budget recommendations for 2025/26 to be on the agenda for the full Parish Council meeting of the 21st October for full Parish Council consideration 	
320/24	<p>14. DATES OF FORTHCOMING MEETINGS AND MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Parish Council Meeting – Monday 21st October 2024, 7:30pm, Pavilion, Charlwood • Planning Committee Meeting – Tuesday 5th November ,7:30pm, The Pavilion, Charlwood • Services & Amenities Committee Meeting – Wednesday 6th November 2024, 1.00pm, The Pavilion, Charlwood 	

There being no other business the Chair closed the meeting at 7:32 pm

Signed as a true record of the meeting, and approved at the Full Parish Council Meeting on the 21st October 2024.

Signed.....