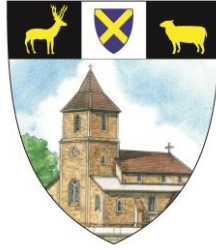


Sandridge Parish Council



Marshalswick Community Centre,
The Ridgeway, St.Albans,
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24th October 2023

TO: Members of the Finance Committee

Councillors John Hale (Chair), Graham Leonard, Luke Sieger, James Lambert, Julie Oakley, Jenny Roberts

You are summoned to attend a meeting of Sandridge Parish Council's Finance Committee, to be held at Marshalswick Community Centre on Monday 30th October 2023 at 7.30pm

Simon Thwaites
Parish Clerk

To assist in the prompt dispatch of business, members requiring further information or clarification on items included on the agenda are requested to enquire prior to the meeting.

A G E N D A

- 1. To receive and accept apologies for absence**
- 2. Disclosures of interest and dispensations**
 - a) To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda
 - b) To receive written requests for dispensations for declarable interests; and
 - c) To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate
- 3. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on the 25th September 2023**
- 4. Election of Vice Chair**

At the June meeting of this committee it was resolved to amend the Terms of Reference to allow the election of a Vice Chair. This was not included on the September meeting agenda in error.
- 5. 2023/24 Budgetary Control and 2024/25 Draft Budget**

To review and discuss the draft budget for 2024/25 (Appendix 1). The draft has been compiled by the Clerk in consultation with officers, suppliers and committees. It prudently estimates the costs of future inflation, pay awards, capital works and events. The reserves position and the five year

forecast (see next item) are based on projected net expenditure of £306,330 in 2023/24 against a budget of £343,095. This represents a projected underspend on budget of £36,675.

In summary, draft net expenditure for 2024/2025 is £357,305. This is an increase of 4.14% on the current year's budget. The draft budget is a combination of ongoing operational expenditure and new one-off items of expenditure as previously agreed by committees. Details of exceptional items may be found in the furthest right-hand column. Please note two items in respect of Sports and Recreation;

1. The sum of £50,000 is shown in the reserves as earmarked for the bike track. This expenditure is not however reflected in the budget at this stage because of uncertainties around if/when it is to be used.
2. The Sports and Recreation capital budget at the adventure playground is shown as £30,000 but without a specific project named. This is because the final cost of complying with planning requirements to build the bike track are unknown and it is probable some of this will be required. It's also probable that the build costs have increased. Most of the £30,000 will however be applied to a new project at any location in 2024/25 once costs are finalised. Any new project(s) will be brought to Full Council before engaging a contractor.

A further significant update is that several budgets have been brought under the control of the new Committee for Sustainability where previously they've not been overseen by any committee. It is;

Recommended

That the draft 2024/25 budget as attached is approved by the Committee subject to funding (see item 6) and subject to final approval by Full Council on December 13th 2023.

6. 5 Year Model

The attached five-year financial model gives an overview of the draft budget in Appendix 1 by identifying trends in the levels of reserves held. Committee Members should ensure when setting budgets that the proposed net expenditure will not create difficulties in maintaining reserves to an acceptable level in future years. It should be noted that an 'acceptable level' can refer to maximum funds held as well as minimum funds held.

The projection supports applying both the recommended draft budget at item 4 and the recommended precept at item 6.

7. 2024/25 Draft Reserves, Precept and Funding Requirement

Appendix 2 details the opening and projected closing position on reserves. The projection assumes that (i) the draft 2024/25 budget is approved, (ii) a 6% increase on the 2023/2024 precept is agreed and (iii) that reserves of £35,064 will be used to support the 2024/2025 budget. Also assumed is the accuracy of the 2023/24 projected outturn. The following should be noted when considering the above points;

Sandridge Parish Council continues to raise the lowest precept in the district (comparable councils - see the attached Reserves Summary) and economic challenges in future years will impact more heavily if the Parish Council fails to maintain balances. A modest inflationary increase in next year's precept will safeguard against the potential for a proportionately higher increase in future years.

In general, future urgent environmental priorities and global unrest could result in increased expenditure for the Parish Council, something that would not have been considered when setting CIPFA recommended levels of General Reserves of between 3 and 6 months operational expenditure. It is;

Recommended

That an increase on the 2023/24 precept of 6% is approved for presentation to Full Council on December 13th 2023.

8. Councillor Training

Councillor Twidell has been instructed in driving the Kubota used to maintain the Woodland Park pathways. He has also been involved in shrub and scrub clearance, supporting the Parish Warden in a volunteer role. Councillor Twidell owns a chainsaw and is keen to assist in tacking larger areas of overgrowth, however the Parish Council's insurer requires relevant training in the use of a chainsaw in a public space to have first been completed.

Enquiries have been made with the relevant body, LANTRA, and training is available over two modules, total five days, at a cost of £695. The training budget of £750 has the sum of £600 remaining unspent this year. It is;

Recommended

That the above training is approved, subject to Councillor Twidell confirming that time can be made available to complete the course.

9. Petty Cash

The Parish Office has noted that petty cash sometimes runs out during the course of the month, requiring a second visit to the Post Office. The float retained was recently reduced to £160 which with hindsight is too low.

It is;

Recommended

That the float in petty cash is increased from £160 to £250 per month. This will also require the amendment of Financial Regulation 6.2.1.

10. Matters of note

- The Hiring of the two community centres continues to be buoyant. The Centres Manager will report to Full Council with further details at the November meeting.
- An insurance claim with a value of £850 has been successfully made in respect of damage to the skate ramp. A contractor has been appointed.
- The 2023/24 salary award has not yet been agreed between unions and the National Joint Council for Local Government Services.

11. Items for inclusion on the next agenda

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday February 12th 2024 at 7.30pm Marshalswick Community Centre