

COLWALL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held in the Jean Simon Room at Colwall Village Hall on Wednesday 14th November 2018 at 8.40pm

Present: Chairman – Councillor Rees and Councillors Beard, Butler, Cottam, Haynes, Kendrick, Stock, Trafford-Roberts and the Clerk.

1. Apologies for Absence.

There were no apologies received.

The Clerk reminded Councillors there remains one vacancy on this committee.

The Chairman reminded non-committee members that they could discuss but not vote upon items on the agenda.

2. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th August 2018 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. 2018/19 Budget

Copies of the draft budget had been circulated to all Councillors prior to the meeting. The administrative budget and other administrative costs e.g. Insurance, Audit Fees etc are proposed by the Clerk and endorsed by the Chairman of the Finance & General Purpose Committee; these are based on expenditure in the current year and allow for inflationary rises and reflect the rate of inflation/pay increase negotiated and agreed by NALC with central Government for staff costs.

Based on a 2% increase of the Precept, the proposed budget runs at a small deficit of £1,964.

The most notable item of change this forthcoming year is that the grant funding from Herefordshire Council for the Footpaths Scheme (P3 scheme) as based on the Cabinet Member: Transport and Roads decision dated 29th April 2016, will cease (but we will continue to receive their admin and legal support for the scheme).

Councillors considered if to:-

1) continue with maintaining the footpaths as we do now; we currently maintain all 50kms of footpaths in the Parish by regular clearing of vegetation, strimming and ensuring no trees block the rights of way as well as maintaining and upgrading and the footpath furniture along these Rights of Way, this covers the stiles, gates, waymarkers and bridge crossing etc.

2) if so, how to fund the cost of the “footpath maintenance” -estimated at £1,900, which is based on the last 3 years spend.

This could be funded from either unallocated reserves or by increasing the precept to cover this annual cost.

Councillors we also invited to consider if they wish to allocate an element of “participatory budget” over and above the figures in the draft budget as discussed at the HALC briefing on the 7th November 2018.

It was proposed that the library surcharge continues at its current level of £16,000 with any surplus remaining at year-end being transferred to the Library Reserve fund as before. Library costs are estimated to total £11,172 for the year. These are the costs arising from the staffing. It is almost certain that at some point the Parish Council will be expected to assume more of the running costs of the library and the reserve fund will cover such eventualities temporarily while we plan and re-budget. There have been no costs associated with the library building as Herefordshire Council continues to maintain and repair the building as per the terms of their lease. Eventually the building will revert to Colwall Parish Council at the end of the lease in November 2023, if not negotiated before. This will bring potentially considerable costs and/or liabilities.

Based on a 2% increase of the Precept, and allowing for the various likely additions and subtractions to and from the accumulated funds the unallocated reserve are forecast to decrease by £6,816 from the likely starting figure of £48,705 to £41,889 by the end of the Budget Year. This is at the top end of the advised optimum range; it could comfortably drop to around £25,000. In addition to the unallocated reserves there are considerable specific Allocated Reserve Funds which are forecast to total approximately £65,718 by the end of the Budget year, 31 March 2020.

There was a suggestion/debate about 1) reducing the Play Equipment Reserve to £15,000 with the balance being transferred to the Parish Projects Fund

At what level the Election Fund should remain at taking into account the election and bye-election costs (see 6 (ii) below).

And the need to place adequate funds in the Parish Projects Fund for potential future projects.

IT WAS AGREED to defer acceptance of the proposed budget and the allocation of the Allocated Reserves, until the “out turn” meeting in April 2019.

Councillors voted to increase the Precept to cover the forecast inflationary increase in costs (at 2%) plus £1,900 to cover the forthcoming abolition of the P3 grant and £2,500 to cover the abolition of the Lengthsman Grant (which had ceased at the end of the 17/18 financial year).

The total precept in the 18/19 year will be £69,409 plus the Library Surcharge of £16,000 totalling £85,409 (the precept in the year 17/18 was £63,734 plus the Library Surcharge of £16,000 totalling £79,734).

The Precept increase will be recommended to Full Council for approval on the meeting on the 28th November 2018.

5. Annual Internal Review

No changes to The Council’s Internal Control Procedures and Risk Assessments financial processes had been recommended by the internal auditor. The Clerk will

produce a Risk Assessment Register for the meeting to be held on the 17th April 2019.

6. Correspondence

i) Precept: The Council’s Precept has to be decided by 31st December 2018 and the appropriate form completed. The Chairman of this committee would bring this to Council’s attention at the November Full Council meeting.

ii) Herefordshire Council - Parish Election Recharge costs for Thursday 2nd May 2019 Election and Bye Elections – based on an electoral register of 1001 to 2000 people in the Parish the respective costs are forecast to be £2,050 (full term costs for 2019) £3,600 By-Election Cost 2019/20.

If the electoral role has increase above 2000 the costs will be £3,200 and £4,000 respectively.

ii) Review donation requests:

None received.

iii) Colwall Parish Council donations – IT WS RESOLVED that all donations will be paid in November 2018 as per the previously approved 2018/19 budget.

Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee would be held on Wednesday 17th April 2019 with a short meeting called on the 12th December 2018 for the approval and signing of these minutes.

The meeting closed at 9.40pm.

Chairman.....

Date.....