



A Meeting of the Employment, Finance & Policies Committee was held on Monday 17th January 2022 at 7.30pm via zoom

Those present at the meeting:

Committee Members: Cllrs Tom Adams (TA), Zak Aravantinos (ZA), Archie Forbes (AF), Kevin Joyce (KJ), Gerald Lloyd (GL), Tom Nicholson (TN), Lynne Stephens (LS) (Chair), Jack Taviner (JT), Larry Van Haaren (LVH), Paul Watkins (PW) and John Witcher (JW).

Other Parish Councillors: Cllr Iain Kilpatrick

Clerk: Lynne Rampton

Members of Public Present: None

Committee Members Absent: Cllrs Mark Boddy and Emma Buckland

1. **Apologies for absence.** No apologies had been received.
2. **Declarations of interest.** No interests had been or were declared.
3. **Public Participation.** With no members of the public present, there was none.
4. **Minute Update from the previous meeting dated 8th November 2021.** None

5. To review 2021/2022 Budget Summary and Bank Reconciliation to 31st December 2021

The committee examined the budget summaries for the period, along with bank statements and bank reconciliation to 31st December 2021. In accordance with adopted Financial Regulations, LS had carried out the quarterly Parish Councillor check of hard copy bank statements, bank recs and a sample of invoices paid. Current budget positions including under/overspends to date were considered along with an explanation for these. Areas of note included an underspend on office rent due to staying in our present accommodation and legal fees yet to be paid. An overspend on IT software was due to the purchase of a new on-line survey tool. A situation regarding unsavoury behaviour in the Gents Public Conveniences may require a change to the current toilet pan and provision for this had been made in the anticipated spend to the financial year end.

The budget summary reports were accepted by the meeting.

Proposed by JW, seconded by JT. All in favour.

The bank reconciliation to 31st December 2021 was accepted by the meeting

Proposed by AF, seconded by LVH. All in favour

6. To agree regular payments from bank account to be made by standing order & direct debit.

To reduce time spent preparing regular cheques or on-line direct payments, it was proposed that the following payments continue to be made directly from the bank account.

It was proposed that the following payments be made by direct debit or standing order for the 2022/2023 financial year:

Regular payments already made by direct debit or standing order – reaffirmed.

DD	Public Works Loan	Frequency – half yearly
DD	Water2Business WMRG	Frequency – half yearly
DD	Water2Business Cem & Allots	Frequency – half yearly
DD	Water2Business – public conveniences	Frequency – half yearly
DD	EDF – electricity WMRG Change Rooms	Frequency – monthly
DD	SSE – public conveniences	Frequency - monthly
DD	SUEZ – waste collection at WMRG	Frequency - monthly
DD	YU – parish street lighting supply	Frequency – monthly
DD	Information Commissioners Office - data protection	Frequency - annually
DD	NSC non domestic rates - Cemetery Store	Frequency - monthly
DD	Grenke - photocopier lease rental	Frequency – quarterly
DD	Hutchison 3G UK Ltd – 2no. mobile phone contracts	Frequency - monthly
SO	All staff salaries	Frequency – monthly
SO	T Nyamunda – hedge cut & tending of Railway Garden	Frequency – monthly
SO	IDF Client - staff pension contribution	Frequency – monthly

Proposed by KJ, seconded by JW, All in favour

7. **Budget Planning for the 2022/2023 financial year & to agree a precept figure for recommendation to the full Parish Council for approval.** Members considered rental charges and other income along with projected expenditure (Jan – Mar 2022) in advance of the 2022/2023 budget proposals.

With a number of large projects to be considered, the Chair reminded members of the need to exercise restraint in consideration of the budget and precept figures. COVID would have an impact on the current and future years council tax base figures.

- a. The parish council agreed in 2011/12 that cemetery fees collected should be earmarked towards future improvements at the Ilex Lane site. The C&G Group now request that permission is granted to replace the roofs to the two pergolas along with a second replacement seat to match the one recently replaced in the first pergola. Funds would be deducted from cemetery earmarked reserves.

Proposed by KJ, seconded by LVH. All in favour

- b. It was proposed that no changes are made to cemetery fees for the 2022/23 financial year. A full review of fees for the cemetery and allotments should take place every 3-years unless there was a material change in maintenance outgoings for the site.

Proposed by GL, seconded by JW. All in favour

- c. Sports Clubs contributions to grounds and changing rooms maintenance – A £50 rise pa was recommended for each and represented an 7.1% increase on current charges. Whilst members were mindful when applying any increased charges to the sports clubs for use of the facilities and grounds, current rents were still considered to be low.

Proposed by ZA, seconded by JW. All in favour

Should Winscombe Rugby Club proceed with a planning application to site changing room containers on the recreation ground, the parish council should consider an appropriate ground rent charge at that time.

- d. **Photocopier contract.** The current 5-year lease agreement expires May 2022; therefore, three proposals had been sought for a new contract that were considered by the meeting. Two responses were received. **It was recommended that on expiry of the current contract, a new 5-year lease contract is entered into for a Toshiba photocopy machine with lease and copy costs as detailed in these papers. Proposed by AF, seconded by TN, all members were in favour**

- d. **Grants.** A list of grant applications received had been included within the budgets. The usual application from Winscombe Youth Club had been made by the club as this was again active after a period of closure due to COVID. Grant applications for 2022/2023 had been received from the Churchill and Langford Minibus Society and The Banwell, Winscombe and Sandford Children's Centre (towards running costs for the centre). These were considered and agreed along with usual contributions/donations for the Strawberry Line (maintenance works of the line in this parish) and the Citizens Advice Rural Outreach Service (currently taking place 'virtually' on a Tuesday morning). An application from the Flags and Festival Group had also been agreed by the PC for the engagement of a professional event planner for the Platinum Jubilee Festival to be held in June 2022. Provision had been made for small grant applications over the course of the next financial year and these would be agreed on a case-by-case basis, along with an application from the Parish Tree Wardens for plaques for Jubilee Oak Trees.

- e. **Churchill Sports Centre.** With the centre having been closed since March 2020 at the outbreak of the pandemic, NSC were now looking at options to re-open this. The building was reported to be in a poor condition in need of repair with NSC to fund this, but no further finance was available for the ongoing running and management costs. The site had a relative low number of users with a total of only 39,000 visits in 2019 including 13,658 swimming visits, meaning that the site's management needed subsidising at an estimated cost of a maximum of £100k a year. NSC were asking for local parishes to consider working together to provide the revenue subsidy to pay for a management contractor to enable the sports centre to re-open. The annual share of the subsidy for this parish council would be £24,008 with a commitment to this same sum for the next 5-years. Seven other parishes were being asked to take a share of the £100k costs with figures calculated per head of population.

Whilst there was some support for the re-opening of the centre, the timing of the unexpected request from NSC 10 days before Christmas allowed the council no time for proper discussion with other interested parties, nor for any meaningful consultation in the parish. An annual commitment of over £24,000pa would have a significant impact on the parish precept (15.7% increase) for this item alone

and this was before the council considered committing to other parish projects that have received community support. There was a clear lack of detail in the request with known costs for the running of such a facility to be exorbitantly high. For these reasons, funds to support the management of the Churchill Sports Centre should not be included in the 2022/23 budget proposals.
Proposed by PW, seconded by GL. 11 members were in favour, 1 against.

- f. **Winscombe Community Centre.** The WCA had approached the parish council for support for funding of a new centre both through a loan (repayments to be met by the WCA each year) as well as a donation of £250,000. The pc would need to take a loan over a period of 30 years to finance such a grant and therefore a period of public consultation had taken place with the community throughout 2021 through an on-line survey, as well as delivery of the pc newsletters to all households in the parish. Of the responses received to the survey, there was significant support for financially contributing towards the project.
Whilst there were still a number of legal and financial discussions to take place with the WCA Trustees and the outcome of the planning application awaited, provision should be made to finance the repayments for a £250,000 loan in the 2022/23 financial year. The allocation of funding in 2022/2023 could allow the building project to progress without unnecessary delay.
Proposed by JW, seconded by JT. 9 in favour, 3 against.
- g. **Greener Church Road Group.** A grant application had been made for the use of an online digital interactive tool to ascertain residents' views on various topics. The application advised that this could be a survey tool not only for local groups to use, but the parish council as well and that they could undertake surveys on behalf of local groups? An amount of £5,000 plus vat had been requested for a six-month licence to pilot the package.
The online consultation tool was considered to be a considerable expense for a half year licence. The GCRG, along with other groups currently conducted their own polls independently of the parish council. The application was recommended for refusal.
Proposed by JT, seconded by AF. All in favour
- h. **CPRE.** A request for annual parish council support from a countryside charity had been received.
The application for a £100 annual donation to CPRE was refused
Proposed by AF, seconded by PW. 9 in favour, 1 against, 2 abstained from the vote
- i. **Staffing – general.** The Clerk and Deputy Clerk were engaged under a model NALC/SLCC contract. A pay award dating back to April 2021 was still under dispute and yet to be decided with unions. All other staff members had received a 2% pay-increase in April 2021. It was noted that the Finance Assistant had recently resigned and was no longer employed by the parish council. Duties had been split between the Clerk and Deputy until a decision made by the pc about the future of the role.
- j. **Environment Working Group.** Due to the late arrival each year of free summer flowers from NSC that helped to fill parish planters, it had been previously agreed that future orders placed with NSC would be scaled back to allow the volunteer planters to purchase and plant their containers when stocks in local garden centres were readily available. This led to an increase in annual planter costs to the pc.
Christmas. With the current contractor no longer providing large, decorated Christmas Trees for Winscombe & Sandford, other options were to be considered by the group during 2022. It was noted that whilst Winscombe traders had generously contributed towards parish seasonal trees, no contribution had been received from any Sandford traders or business.
The Christmas budget request should be reduced to £1,000
Proposed by AF, seconded by GL, 10 in favour, 1 against, 1 abstention.

Whilst not a recommendation from the Working Group, it was considered prudent to replenish depleted funds for the replacement of **parish street lighting** equipment. Considerable expenditure had been incurred in 2021 due to the age of our 100+ lights.

- k. **War Memorial Recreation Ground Advisory Committee**
With considerable expenditure having taken place over the past 2-years to repair a collapsed drainage system on the parish council owned access road, future essential maintenance works for the road and carpark were considered. To reduce expenditure in the next financial year, final works were split over a two-year period, with resurfacing works to take place at a later date.
Repairs to the car park, completing the kerbing along the cricket field, and refreshing all the car park lining including alterations to angles of spaces along cricket field to allow easier parking had been included at a cost of £3750.

It was proposed that repairs to the carpark and re-lining works do not take place in 2022/23 and be removed from the budget

Proposed by TN, seconded by TA. 5 in favour, 5 against, 1 abstention

(IK vote was not counted as a non-committee member)

In a tied vote, the committee Chair used a casting vote and voted against the proposal. Carpark and re-lining costs would be included in budget proposals.

The additional CCTV cameras for the grounds were not considered a priority at this time and were removed from the committee budget request.

Proposed by GI, seconded by ZA. All in favour

- I. *Play areas and skatepark.*** Areas of maintenance had been highlighted during routine inspection reports for all play areas and of significant note was a replacement piece of equipment for the skatepark. With the skatepark nearing 20-years of age, it was considered prudent to continue to replace items as recommended.

It was proposed that consideration be given to relacing the central 'fun box' in the skatepark in the 2022/23 financial year and funding for this should remain in the budget

Proposed by TN, seconded by LVH. 9 in favour, 1 against, 2 abstained from the vote

- m. *General Reserves.*** The Parish Council had previously been reminded of the need for general reserves to keep pace with recent precept and budget increases. With budget demands for 2022/23 leading to a significant rise in the parish precept and with the CPI currently at a high level it was considered prudent to keep reserves at the present level with a view to increasing these in 2023/24.

The Employment, Finance & Policies Committee recommend to the full Parish Council that the projected forecast figures (2021/2022) and budget (2022/2023) as detailed are approved. This would result in a Precept figure for the 2022/2023 financial year to be increased from £155,000 to £174,000 and would mean a Local Council Element of Headline Council Tax per D Band property increase from £73.33 to £80.25 which is equivalent to a 9.4% increase per 'D' band property on the current financial year.

The budget, as amended was recommended to the parish council for approval

Proposed by JT, seconded by KJ, 9 in favour, 2 against, 1 abstained from the vote

The parish precept demand of £174,000 was recommended to the parish council for approval

Proposed by JW, seconded by GL, 9 in favour, 2 against, 1 abstained from the vote

- 8. *Training for members and staff*** – to agree and adopt a policy for training and to introduce a feedback form to be completed after the event. **The training policy document, as presented was duly adopted by the committee. Proposed by TN, seconded by JW. All in favour**

9. *Staffing matters:*

To consider current position following the resignation of the Finance Assistant

The vacant position would be covered between the Clerk and Deputy in the interim period to ascertain what was required of the role. The matter would be further considered at the next committee meeting

- b. *To consider the open and close of the public conveniences and regular maintenance of the Railway Garden***

With the contractor no longer wishing to continue with this daily task, this duty would be taken over by our cleaning contractor. The previous open/close contractor would continue with maintenance to the hedges in the railway garden and take on weekly maintenance for the recently planted garden area.

- 10. *To receive a copy of the NALC Model Financial Regulations – review to commence and to be considered at next meeting.***

The model document had been made available to members, who were invited to submit comments to the Clerk on these, along with the current adopted version.

- 11. *Matters for Information.*** None

With no further business, the meeting concluded at 9.41 pm

Signed..... (Chairman)

Date.....