

Date of Meeting: 17th January 2019

Subject: Budget & Precept Report 2019 – 2020

Introduction:

While provision was made in last year's budget to begin building reserves specifically to replace playground equipment, subsequent events proved the amounts to be insufficient for immediate repairs and even less appropriate going forward. Equipment in both playgrounds has given excellent service and exceeded its expected lifespan but the escalating prices of repair/replacement together with the very dry summer (that created additional problems at ground level for both safety flooring and anchoring units) meant that only the two sets of swings could be replaced in Queen's Garden, the agility trail had to be taken out of service as did units in Viper. Council is looking to increase its contribution to both playgrounds but cannot afford all that needs to be done so additional fund raising schemes involving the village as a whole are in hand, together with other avenues to be explored, such as grants that might be sought.

The Cricket Field project proceeds slowly. Budget reflects the cost of a PWLB loan to complete the initial work and suitable support for local clubs to maintain the facility once available to them. Rules for PWLB applications having changed recently a Public Consultation must take place to ensure that it is the wish of the majority of the village to proceed. A Public meeting together with a village-wide Survey is planned for early February 2019.

It is a pleasure to report that work, having been completed on the Old Etchingham Stores, two energetic local businesses now rent the premises from the CIC, the Council's tenant. A long-term relationship is anticipated and a bright future wished for the two entrepreneurs.

Etchingham Parish Council Reserve Funds:

The 3rd Quarter Accounts for 2019/20 include details of the Council's Reserve Funds and Members are advised as follows in respect of these Funds;

- 1) Capital Reserve £29,686.92 this is the remaining balance of the proceeds from the sale of the old village hall and the balance of the PWLB loan and is restricted in so far as *it can only be used for Capital expenditure*. This figure is less than at this point last year following expenditure to complete work on the Shop and provision of completely new swing units in Queen's Garden as repair was not possible. The remaining reserve is primarily for work to the Cricket Field.
- 2) General Funds & Reserves £29,828.94 these funds represent the day to day operating costs of the Council plus some designated reserves for elections and other expenses. There is of course a further Quarter's expenditure to be paid from this sum.

Community Projects: 2019/20

Within the accounting system this term has been replaced as a group by 'Budget Lines' these are the sums allocated to various projects in order to maintain a better understanding and control of income and expenditure through the year. Outstanding sums at year end will be carried forward as before but shown, for clarity, in the 'Budget Line' as well as included in General Funds & Reserves for external audit process.

BUDGET LINES	Comments
Open Spaces incs play areas & equipment and non-routine tree work	Zero remains
Shop Maintenance inc fees	Zero but rental income will change this in 2019/20
Neighbourhood Plan	All external grant monies accounted for, additional external grant may be available, little of EPC grant utilised although this will be called upon shortly.
British Legion	An annual donation but as not paid until November (unlike all others paid in April) stands alone to be accounted for through the year.
Traffic Projects	£1000 allocated and if not used in 18/19 will carry forward to be added to 19/20 in due course.

Annual Subscriptions:

The proposed budget for 2019/20 includes an amount of £550 in total for Subscriptions.

At present the annual subscriptions of the Council are as follows:

NALC & SSALC 271.81 (confirmed for 2019/20)

The following were paid in 2018/19, we do not have 2019/120 figures yet

RALC 30.00

CPRE 36.00 (an optional amount which may be increased in 19/20)

SLCC 128.00

Grants

The following chart shows grants/donations proposed for this year totalling £2,975.00

Club/Group	2019/2020 Proposed
GRANTS	
Neighbourhood Plan	1000.00
PCC	500.00
Etchingham Improvements Committee	500.00
Friendship Club (previously Darby & Joan)	100.00
Rother Valley Ladies	100.00
Tuesday Lunch Club	350.00
Brownies	100.00
DONATIONS	
Hurst Green 1 st Responders	100.00
BACT	100.00
Rother Rural Trust	50.00
CPRE	50.00
Etchingham Poppy Appeal	25.00
Total	£2975.00

Grants and donations are made across as wide a variety of community needs and activities as possible. During the course of the year should there be an urgent and/or unexpected financial crisis to a village group the Council will always do it's best to help if approached.

The Tuesday Lunch Club has been included on this list for the first time as the Reserve held in the name Gard Homes and Council Tax Reserves, which used to fund this, were both at zero last year and cannot be reinstated. £350 represents the average expenditure per annum to support this service.

Our Section 137 grant figure for this year has increased slightly in line with our Electoral Roll i.e. around £5k. This is the maximum Council would be allowed to spend in this way from its Budget not unfortunately an additional receipt, so the budge line remains below this again.

Conclusion:

Members will need to consider the above against the Council's intention to keep any increase in Council Tax to a minimum. The Budget forecast has been prepared to enable the Council to fulfil existing projects and make provision for the future maintenance of facilities together with taking forward the Neighbourhood Plan to successful conclusion. Efforts will continue to replenish and increase the General Reserves to a level commensurate with Best Practice. The regular income for the Shop is very welcome and will assist greatly going forward.

Paulette Barton – Clerk to the Council

January 2019