

WORTWELL PARISH COUNCIL

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

9 OCTOBER 2023

6.00PM

MINUTES

Present: Cllr H Carter; Cllr J Worley and Cllr B Eddy.

In attendance: Lua Leggett RFO

1. Review of Budget 2023/2024 – Half-Year Adjustments:

a. Pay and Rewards for Clerk:

NJC Awards for the last two years have been delayed by many months and this has made it hard to accurately predict the Clerk Pay and rewards benefits. Allocation has been made for the second half of the year to support the proposed 6% 23/24 NJC pay award, although this has yet to be agreed. Overtime payment in May.

Recommendation: Uplift Salary Budget by £2990 to cover potential increase/backpay and increased HMRC NI and NEST disbursements.

b. Street Lighting Npower Energy costs:

Original budget based on OCT NOV DEC 2022 lighting costs. Meters have been adjusted and Npower costs appear to have reduced considerably in the Summer months of 2023, however, there are six months of Winter hours to account for. Discussion concluded to double the Summer amounts paid, for the winter months. This leaves a surplus in the budget which will be used to part offset other increases.

Recommendation: Reduce Street Lighting Budget from £7800 to £5000 releasing £2,800 from this budget.

c. Street Light Repairs – to date no repairs have been needed. Budget of £804 unused.

Recommendation: Reduce the repairs budget in this area from £804 to £200 (which is sufficient for replacement of three LED Lamps) releasing £604 from this budget.

d. Grounds and Maintenance: We were without a groundman for the first four months of the year. £3600 originally budgeted for groundsman, maintenance and Dog bin and purchase of new bin from this budget.

Recommendation: Allocate £1753 for new groundsman budget which equates to 18 x hours per month, £216 for the next seven months. (including £241 already paid August). £247 allocated for supplies and materials. (£2000 total) releasing £655 from this budget.

e. Donations: to date we have made no donations. We need to include the poppy wreath and potentially a donation to the local first responder group. Discuss at next PC Meeting allocation of donation budget.

Recommendation: Keep within original budget of £250

f. Office Administration: Purchase of new lap top after old lap top crashed was not budgeted for taking the office budget over by £264

Recommendation: increase budget to £500

- g. Annual Insurance Policy increased over budget by 13% - £69
Recommendation: hold as a variance to be explained in audit. Do nothing with budget adjustments.
- h. RoSPA inspection increased over budget by 42% £78
Recommendation: review whether this needs to be done annually and if there are alternative providers of this inspection. Clerk to speak to Insurance Company to confirm their needs for play equipment certification over and above the weekly checks done by Councillors and report back to next meeting.

RECEIPTS

Precept	£33,773.20
Receipts	£ 390.00
Gross income projected Year end	£34,163.20

Overall impact on Budget Forecast year end adjusted:

Budget for 2023/24	£34,148.20
Forecast year end 2023/24 after adjustments	£33,953.00
Forecast year end surplus	£ 195.20

2. Budget 2024/2025 First Draft

Committee reviewed the draft budget against the discussions above, based on the projected year end forecast for 2023/24. Agreed to use these figures as a basis for the budget for 2024/25 See spreadsheet attached to these minutes.

Recommendations:

- i. Support Groundworks and Maintenance budget from Reserves £1100
- ii. Increase Npower from £5000 to £6800 but review in January 2024 when three winter months will be actual rather than forecast figures. Adjust if necessary.
- iii. Move the Mardler Newsletter to online only but provide paper copies on Notice boards around the village. Recommend an item in the next Mardler to test the reaction to this idea. Reduce budget from £1158pa to £50pa for small printing costs.
- iv. Increase Annual Insurance budget from £650 to £700
- v. Ignore VAT in budget as this can be withdrawn or rate changed at any time. Use the rebates that we do receive for injections to land management and administration costs.
- vi. Play equipment has been budgeted within the groundsman budget for repairs only Recommendation that no further assets are purchased for the next three years as these all add to our insurance costs, maintenance and care costs. Review in 2026/27 The exception to this could be a further SAM2 machine should the speeding continue to be an issues.

3. Reserves

- a. Discussed and agreed that we need to keep as with common practice, six x months of precept as income reserves: £17592.00 and a further £7,500 for capital reserves towards long term capital projects.

Recommendation: to maintain the base level of £25,000 but look to increase this to £30,000 over the next three to five years.

- b. **Recommendation:** Reserves will be allocated to cover play equipment repairs as they arise to a maximum of £1100 for the 2024/25 financial year to help reduce the impact on precept demands.

- c. **Recommendation:** that Reserves remain in the Lloyds Bank Business Premium account where it earns modest interest of 1.3% (as at 10/10/23) but is available without notice. RFO to review if a rolling fixed term deposit for some of these funds would be worth doing. Suggestion circa £10K current rates:

i. Fixed Term Deposit		£10K
1.	3 months	2.00%
2.	6 months	3.5%
3.	9 months	3.55%
4.	12 months	3.6%
5.	Fixed date	27/3/24 3.5%
6.	Fixed date	18/9/24 3.6%

4. Long Term Planning

- a. Solar PV Lighting Project – to explore switching the street lighting in the village from NG to Solar PV.

Action: Agenda for next PC meeting 30/10/23

Proposal: Clerk to research and report back to full Council with any proposals or recommendations by the end of this financial year.

- b. Alburgh Allotments – Land management. Alburgh would like to divest themselves of this responsibility

Action: Agenda for next PC meeting 30/10/23

Proposal: Clerk to explore process with Charity Commission

Proposal: RFO to explore financial implications of taking on an asset with Financial liabilities in maintenance and upkeep vs return on investment from purposing land.

Meeting ended 8.30PM.