

ITCHEN VALLEY PARISH COUNCIL
(Serving the villages of Avington, Easton, Itchen Abbas & Martyr Worthy)
Minutes of the Meeting
Finance & General Purposes Committee
November 20th 2014

Present: Cllr Kennedy - Chairman, Cllr Flemons, Cllr Moffatt

In attendance: Cllr Powe

5.1 Apologies – Cllr Robinson.

5.2 Accounts be Paid as Listed.

£

300173	Littleton & Harestock PC (SLR Ins)	6.50
300174	Itchen Valley Churches (Section 137)	900.00
300175	CAB (Section 137)	75.00
300176	Worthy Plants (replace dead oaks)	138.00
300177	SSE Electric Couch Green	47.31
300178	Parish Plan Printing	165.00

The accounts were agreed and the cheques signed.

5.3 Budget discussions to allow a 2015/16 precept to be recommended to Full Council.

The Chairman circulated the latest forecast of expenditure to 31st March 2015. We have had to make certain assumptions because we have not had an electricity account for street lighting yet. The Clerk agreed that we pay only one account to HCC.

The forecast was based on the premise that we would be paying £3,000 to SDNP for the bus shelters in this financial year, which was confirmed by Cllr Powe; but we would not have any more expenditure on play areas in the current year – see minute 5.4 for clarification. If there were to be any such expenditure then there would be a reduced balance of reserves to carry forward against expenditure plans for the 2015/16 budget year. Subsequent to the meeting Cllr Riley confirmed the likelihood of expenditure on play equipment in the remainder of this financial year in the region of £4,000. This has now been built into the forecast, and as a result it has been deemed imprudent to carry the originally forecasted earmarked reserve for play equipment of £1,600 forward into 2015/16.

A copy of the amended forecast is attached to these minutes. This shows a balance of general reserve to be carried forward of £834, in practice this is likely to be required to cover timing differences in the recovery of VAT.

Also attached to these minutes is the first draft 2015/16 budget proposal for review by full council. This proposal contains all the amounts that have been requested by councillors to be included in the budget. The committee's recommendations on this first draft are as follows -

The budget proposals include certain amounts (£1,000) to cover reinstatement of the Couch Green changing rooms and future running costs associated with this. The committee is not convinced that this represents value for money for the Itchen Valley community as a whole, bearing in mind that the current users are non-resident, and recommends that full council do not commit to this without some certainty that future use of the reinstated changing rooms would primarily benefit local residents.

The Clerk was informed at Cheriton PC that HCC have cut all subsidies to local buses. This is subject to confirmation (there is nothing about it on Hantsweb and it was not an option in the consultation document on transport subsidies), but if true may colour the attitude of SDNP (and IVPC) to replacing the bus shelters as proposed. As it is, SDNP are now indicating that they may only be able to cover the provision of four out of six new bus shelters in the immediate future; and Cllr Powe asked that £1,000 be added to the budget for 2015/16 in case we need to assist more. With SDNP paying in the region of £20,000 we would still be getting a good deal, but if they cannot provide the extra two we could use the £1000 to repair the remainder. The committee recommends that full council proceed on this basis

We have now received the funding from HCC for the Lengthsman in 2015. Costs for 2015 will remain the same as 2014. The budget assumes the scheme will be renewed for 2016 with the same grant from HCC but a higher cost payable to the Lengthsman. There is a small amount unspent from current funding (£25 per council) which is carried forward in the budget to part-offset these higher costs when they arise. The Clerk will advise Associate Councils what we are doing.

The budget draft includes the following items of play equipment etc –
 £9,120 zip wire at Couch Green, contingent upon receiving £6,120 Open Spaces funding from the Rectory Lane development (net cost to council £3,000).
 £2,000 outdoor gym for Couch Green, this will probably require additional external funding.

£2,100 activity tower for Old School Field, which will probably also require further external funding.

£750 for young persons' activities centred round football coaching at Couch Green and tennis coaching at Worthy Park.

£750 to be ringfenced in the 2015/16 budget for carrying forward to 2016/17

The committee recommends that full council review these proposals to ensure they represent a) value for money in the context of likely usage by parish residents; and b) an appropriate allocation of limited council resources (noting that no other major projects have been shortlisted for budget approval other than shown in the proposal).

The overall impact of the draft budget is to require an increase in the precept from £17,700 (£23.93 per band D household) to £23,300 (c. £31.50 per band D household), an increase of £5,600 or 32%.

The Clerk advised that the current year's precept was £23.93 per band D household, i.e. less than £2 a month, which was the 7th lowest in the Winchester District out of 45 parishes setting a precept (£5.06 lowest, £126.84 highest); the Band D precept across all parishes is £69.30, so an increase is certainly justifiable in the context of spending for the benefit of the community. The committee noted that immediately adjacent predominantly rural parishes such as Bramdean, Cheriton, Northington, and Tichborne all had higher precepts; only Itchen Stoke was lower, albeit just marginally.

The committee's overall recommendation to full council is that it should, at its December meeting, consider the various discretionary elements in the budget proposal and, having resolved whether or not to include them in the final budget, accept the resulting precept requirement as final for 2015/16.

5.4 Play Equipment Updates.

No updates on this matter however there was some confusion on expenditure plans for the remainder of this financial year, Cllr Kennedy to ask Cllr Riley for clarification.

Subsequent to the meeting, Cllr Riley confirmed that the current feedback from the questionnaire that had been circulated in the Valley indicated that the most-requested piece of equipment was the ground trampoline, which could be installed for an amount in the region of £4,000.

5.5 Any Other Financial Matters agreed by the Chairman.

Terms of reference for the Old School Field Sub-Committee.

The Chairman asked what would be the implications of the Trustees using the field for parking if this was not specifically included in the terms of reference - are they still covered in full by the insurance? The Clerk advised that provided the parking bookings are notified to the Clerk prior to the event and that the booking is not against the council's interest then cover is granted. However if a parking booking takes place without due notification and an incident occurs then there would be no insurance cover. It's all about the free exchange of information and keeping the council informed. The committee considered that since this did not prevent the Trustees acting in accordance with terms of the Trust that this ought to be acceptable.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:20pm