

Mere Parish Council

PARISH CLERK - MRS. L. C. WOOD

Minutes of the Annual Budget Meeting held on Wednesday, 3rd December 2014 at 7.00 p.m. in The Parish Council Office, Duchy Manor, Springfield Road, Mere.

Present: Councillors: Brett Norris (Chairman), N. Beale, C. Hazzard, R. Hill, G. Jeans, J. Jordan, E. Mitchell & Mrs. L. Traves

Apologies for absence – Received from Cllr. P. Coward and Cllr. M. Cassidy.

Declarations of Interest

- Cllr. Hazzard declared an interest in Floral Enhancements
- Cllr. John Jordan declared an interest in matters relating to the Footpath Group

PLANNING

Application Ref: 14/08740/VAR

Application for: Variation of Condition

Proposal: Vary condition 3 of S/2000/0578 restricting use of building for horticultural use only

At: Horticultural Cabin, Off White Road, Mere

The Clerk reminded members that the Parish Council had submitted this planning application and it was therefore agreed that a 'No Comment' response should be submitted.

Application Ref: 14/11213/FUL

Application for: Full Planning

Proposal: Demolish existing conservatory and erect 2 storey extension and porch on north east elevation

At: Furzehill, Mill Lane, Mere, Wiltshire. BA12 6DA

The Clerk explained that the above application had just been received and that the deadline date for responding was 29th December. RESOLVED that the Clerk should send in a response supporting the application nearer to the consultation deadline on the understanding that there were no objections received from members of the public in the meantime.

Expenses - To consider budgeted expenditure for the year 2015/16 (the attached spreadsheet contains all reserve & budget figures but the following items were given particular consideration at the meeting)

Admin

Honour Board – Cllr. Jeans offered to pay for an Honours Board for past Clerks to be displayed alongside the Honours Board for Chairmen. Cllr. Jeans was thanked for this generous offer and it was agreed to discuss the matter at a future council meeting.

Legal Services – the Clerk informed members that there were known legal costs likely or pending for the lease for the band hut, transfer of horticultural shed and possible new lease for the youth club building. It was therefore agreed to retain £2400 in reserves and budget a further £600

Staff & Councillor Training – the Clerk explained that she would like to offer training for pesticide/weed spraying to one groundsman and training for chainsaw work to the other groundsman and training on the basic ride-on mowers and use of brushcutters to both groundsmen. As only one groundsman had now passed his B+E (trailer driving) course, it would be helpful if the other groundsman could also drive the trailer. It was also agreed that the grounds

staff and Clerk should attend a First Aid training course (Cllr. Jeans suggested that the Clerk should contact Julie Cousins at the Chamber of Trade for information on this). It was therefore agreed to retain reserves of £1200 and add a further £1200 in order to fulfil these training requirements.

Office equipment/services/stationery – the Clerk explained that it would be very helpful for office staff if an outside sensor light could be fixed to the corner of the office as it is extremely dark in the area when working in the later afternoons in the winter or in the evenings.

Andy Young Pavilion

Equipment & Furniture – there was a discussion on whether or not curtains/blinds should be provided in the pavilion. It was agreed to retain the reserves of £2340 and to consider this matter further at a future council meeting with the suggestion that the Area Board be approached to help match fund costs of blinds if the Parish Council felt that this was necessary/appropriate.

Footpaths & car park – members discussed the possibility of provision of lighting for the car park but felt that this was not possible given the present financial climate. Members also discussed the possibility of tarmac for the car park but again, it was felt that the Council would only be in a position to provide more hardcore to even out the surface. Cllr. Mitchell said that he was happy to come in with a wacker plate to compact the hardcore.

Buildings

Chapels – it was agreed that a further £500 should be added and that the work recommended last year should be carried out as soon as possible.

Clock Tower – it was agreed that a further £5,500 should be added so that there is a total budget of £15,000 for painting and repair work to be carried out on the clock tower.

Capital Project

Litter Bins – it was agreed to budget £800 to provide the litter bins as recommended by the Fire Risk Assessment (one outside the Andy Young Pavilion and one outside the Changing Rooms).

Machinery & Equipment/grounds – the Clerk confirmed that the grounds staff had identified a requirement for a small trailer to go on the back of the ride-on mower but at a cost of around £150 and it was also agreed to keep a lookout for a trailer for the water bowser. It was agreed to budget a further £2000 to add to £1646 in reserve.

Skatepark – the Clerk explained that it was necessary to keep £1995.50 in reserve as this was the retention fee held back but due to the contractors one year after the skate park had been completed.

Car Parks

Long term reserves for maintenance – it was noted that £4230 was set aside in reserve and agreed that a further £2000 should be budgeted to allow for wall repointing, relining and pothole repairing. Cllr. Jeans said that Cllr. Tony Deane had agreed to reline the car park free of charge but there would be no funding available from the Area Board for resurfacing and there were a few pothole issues. Cllr. Jeans advised that the relining should be requested as an issue to the CATG.

Castle Hill

Flag Pole – Cllr. Jeans stated that he recalled that Mr. Jeffrey Paul had agreed to arrange for the flag pole to be X-rayed in order to assess the state of the structure underground. It was agreed to pursue this further.

Castle Hill/Long Hill Environment Plan – HLS Scheme

The Clerk pointed out that the £6500 in reserve was set aside to pay for the fencing & archaeological work for Castle Hill (the grant income was shown on the income spreadsheets) + implementation of the HLS Scheme work programme for Year 4. The recommended £4000 budgeted for 2015/16 would go towards implementation of the HLS Scheme work programme for year 5.

Cemetery

Walls, railings & footpaths – it was agreed that £200 should be added to the reserves for repainting the railings and it was agreed that the Clerk should look into whether or not this could be appropriate work for the probation service with the possibility of financial contributions.

Chairman's Expenses – it was agreed that the Chairman's Allowance for expenses should be increased to £320.

Cllrs. Discussed the issue of Parish Council/Town Council status and Cllr. Jeans said that there is an indication that towns have more influence than parishes at County level. The Clerk explained that there would be no extra expenses involved in changing the status to a Town Council and it was not even necessary to have a Mayor. You could still have a Town Council with a Chairman. It was agreed that this should be raised and discussed again at a future Parish Council meeting (before the Annual Parish Meeting).

Changing Rooms

The Clerk pointed out that the electricity costs were shared between the Changing Rooms and the office but all other utility costs were solely for the Changing Rooms. The total expenditure of the changing rooms (excluding electricity) in the last year was over £2000 and, indeed this figure would increase significantly if you added the costs of training and risk assessments/action for Legionella as it was the changing room showers that raised the risks for this. Cllr. Mitchell said that he did not see why the Parish Council should subsidise the football clubs to this extent and agreed to speak to representatives from the football clubs. The Clerk said that she would investigate whether or not it was possible to purchase a 'pay as you go' gas meter.

Duchy Manor Grounds

Security – It was recommended to budget £150 to allow for the provision of PIR sensor lighting on the outside of the office buildings so as to provide some lighting outside for the Clerk and Assistant when leaving the office in the dark.

Footpaths

Footpath Group – it was agreed to budget £350 to allow for a donation towards the Footpath Group to help with grant applications etc.

Mere Community Area Partnership – it was agreed that the £500 in reserve for this purpose could be used towards match funding for community grant applications.

Public Toilets

Water & Sewerage – The Clerk said that she had been surprised at the high level of water & sewerage charges for the Public Toilets but did not know of any way to reduce these charges. It was agreed to retain £700 in reserve and budget a further £1400 for this purpose.

Recreation Ground Charity Expenses

Legal/valuations – it was agreed to budget £1000 to allow for legal fees for any lease agreement that may be necessary for the youth club building.

Youth Club Building – it was agreed that £1000 should be reserved and £4000 should be budgeted to allow for any expenses on the youth club building or donations to Seeds4Success and that this particular subject should be discussed in further detail at the next Parish Council meeting.

River Cleaning – it was agreed that a budget of £500 should be allowed for the purchase of a bin or donation to the Rivers Group for the hiring of a skip to aid the Riparian owners or River Group in disposal of weeds etc.

Section 137 Donations & Grants

Carers Support – the Clerk pointed out that she had received a letter from them asking for financial support. It was agreed to ask Carers Support to provide a breakdown of the work they have carried out in the Mere Area and to suggest that they approach the Forest Charities (R. Coward – Chairman).

Contribution towards SID

A budget of £200 had been made in order to make a donation towards the community Speed Indicator Device scheme, as agreed at the Parish Council meeting held earlier this week (Minute Reference 225b)

Income 2015/16– To consider rents and charges for the following:-

Allotments Income – rentals – The Clerk explained that the last increase was made in 2009 and took effect in March 2010 with a £5 increase on all allotment rents to cover extra administration costs. The Clerk also pointed out that the Council was required to give allotment holders a year's notice of any increase. The Clerk explained that allotment rentals were covering the allotment expenses at the present time and it was agreed that no further increases should be made.

Higher Level Stewardship Scheme - Castle Hill/Long Hill Environmental Stewardship

Scheme – The Clerk had included income by way of grants from the Environmental Stewardship Scheme (Natural England) for capital works identified within the scheme + annual payment and also the Area Board Grant which had been approved for the fencing.

Cemetery Income – It was recommended that all cemetery/burial charges be increased by approximately 3% (inflation rate) and rounded up or down to the nearest £1. The Clerk pointed out that £4900 is the average of the cemetery income received over the last 4 years.

Grants, Donations & Contributions

Sports Clubs- It was agreed that all sports club contributions and should be increased by 3% (inflation rate).

Pledges/Sponsorship by businesses for Car Park – the Clerk reported that she had not yet had a chance to get out the invoices to the businesses but was hopeful that they would honour their pledges again this year.

Precept

The above income & expenditure budget figures for 2015/16 would result in a demand on Wiltshire Council of £110183.75. Last year, Wiltshire Council gave us a top up grant of £7098.11 to make up any shortfall in funding as a result of the reduction in Council Tax Support by Central Government. However, they had announced that they will be reducing this grant by 27% and this year we will only be getting £5181.62. This will result in a net precept of £105002.13 on Wiltshire Council. This figure, divided by the revised tax base of 1119.81 will result in an increase of 2.8% on a Band D property – taking it from £91.19 to £93.77 (£0.21 per month)

Meeting closed at 10.22 p.m.

Exclusion of the Press & Public

It was resolved that under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by S100 of the Local Government Act 1972, to exclude the press and public for the remaining items of the agenda and the minutes for the remainder of this meeting would not be available to the press and public since it would represent a disclosure of personal information involving staff. *There were no press or public in attendance at the meeting at this point.*