

Mere Town Council

TOWN CLERK - MRS. L. C. WOOD

Minutes of the Annual Budget Meeting held on Wednesday, 20th November 2019 at 7.00 p.m. in The Town Council Office, Duchy Manor, Springfield Road, Mere.

Present: Councillors: C. Hazzard (Chairman), P. Coward, R. Coward, G. Jeans (from 8.15 pm), J. Jordan, E. Mitchell & Mrs. L. Traves.

The Chairman of the Town Council, Cllr. Clive Hazzard Chaired the Meeting

Apologies for absence – Cllrs. A. Colman, A. Mead and R. Pester sent their apologies for absence.

Declarations of Interest

- Cllr. Hazzard declared an interest in Floral Enhancements & Rental for Storage Containers

EXEMPT BUSINESS – RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting (or part thereof) during consideration of the business set out below on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined within part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A and more particularly specified in paragraphs 14 and 1. Proposal made by Cllr. P. Coward, seconded by Cllr. Mitchell and carried with a unanimous vote.

The Clerk provided the following notes for councillors to consider prior to the budget meeting:

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RESERVES: I can report that the Town Council has a surplus of £2025.50 on my amended reserves at 30.11.19.

PROVISION TAX BASE FIGURES: The provisional tax base for 2020/21 has gone up from 1169.96 to 1190.64 which means that if we had the same precept as last year, it would make a difference of -£2.17 per Band D house or -1.74%.

PUBLICATION – Please note that we will be required to provide a breakdown of expected expenditure and income to Wiltshire Council for them to publish as our precept is likely to be over £140,000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT – I have not heard any further news about plans to extend council tax referendums to local councils in line with the three-year deal that was announced in January 2018. I expect the government has had other things to deal with! But it may be worth bearing in mind that we could only have 2 years before we are likely to be capped.

SECTION 106 FUNDING – I have had no news on the Section 106 funding for the Woodlands Road development. Originally C. G. Fry & Son thought that we could expect to receive the first payment (prior to the occupation of the 20th dwelling on Phase 1 of the development) at around May 2019 and then, after I had sent a further enquiry, it seemed likely to be October 2019. It seems that the houses are not selling as fast as expected and so it is difficult to predict when the funds will be received.

The draft figures prepared by the Clerk and presented to members prior to the meeting resulted in a precept increase of 12.28%. Members considered the Clerks notes (in black) and made the following recommendations (in red) on the list of expenses and income as follows:

EXPENSES

ADMIN

Audit Costs – regime changed Limited Assurance Regime & our external auditors are PFK Littlejohn LLP. At present time audit fee depends on level of income/expenditure and whether or not there are any questions raised to the external auditor by members of the public etc. We managed to stay just under the £200k last year and incurred audit fee of £400 but if we go over £200k we will have to have an intermediate review rather than a basic limited assurance review. Obviously this requires more work to prepare more documents for submission to the auditors but will also incur a higher fee (£600 for income bracket £200k - £300k) Suggest we budget £800 as we are on the borderline and will definitely go over if and when we receive S.106 funding. **Committee agreed.**

Election Costs – I had been led to believe that the Town Council would need to share the costs of the May 2017 election but no invoice has been received from Wiltshire Council. However, if we have to have a by-election during the course of the year it could cost as much as £3500. Two years ago members agreed to reduce our reserves from £3500 to £500 and last year we added £500 to the reserves. Do you want to add another £500? **Yes – recommend budget £500 to add to reserves.**

Insurance – amended reserves to £855 to cover the insurance valuation costs + insurance claim excess fee of £250. Also, I imagine that insurance may increase next year considering the fact that we are in the process of making a claim. Suggest we keep budget at £4600 though. **Committee agreed.**

Legal Services – We have reserves of £2750. We have just paid £500 for renewal of youth club lease. We need to pay legal expenses for renewal of leases for car parks & public toilets and we have already received a quotation of £750 for this. We also have to pay for renewal of croquet club lease for which we have received a quote of £500 and so that brings our reserves down to £1500. Our office lease expires next year and that will require legal expenses. I suggest we budget £1000 to bring reserves back up. **Committee agreed.**

Publications – **remove this budget heading and reserves as no longer required.**

Rentals/rates (office) – Current rent is £50 pa and rates were £1449.35. **Recommended to budget £1550 but to add a further £1800 to budget to allow for potential rate increase if Town Council were to take on admin area of the old Children's Centre.**

Staff & Councillor training – Training requirements (wish list) for grounds staff:

James & Simon just taken IPAF (working from platform (cherry picker) course)

James & Simon – Ride on mowers - £225 + VAT per person

James & Simon – Hedge cutters

James & Simon - Strimmers @ £180 each

James & Simon - Legionella

Simon – NRSWA (Signing, Lighting & Guarding) @ £175

James & Simon– NRSWA (Operatives Course) @ £695

Simon – First Aid at Work course - £75

Simon – Pest control

Simon – Basic Tree Inspection

Recommend budget £535

ALLOTMENTS

Materials – The Clerk expressed concern over the uneven surface of the car park at Wellhead and uncertainty over responsibility. She had received two complaints - one from a resident of Wellhead whose daughter fell over in the car park and one from a resident who has knocked the Catalytic Converter on his car and needed to replace it. We have installed an 'At Your Own Risk' sign in the car park but not yet written to all the residents, as previously resolved, informing them of the policy and conditions of use of the car park and asking them if they would like to form a residents group to raise funds and provide materials to improve the surface of the car parking area. This would be done, but the Clerk felt that if the Town Council was willing to put in some seed money –

enough to buy a lot of road planings – then it may act as an encouragement for the residents to put in funds to enhance the project so that the surface could be levelled and compacted as well. **Agreed to budget £500 so that there would be sufficient funds to buy lorry load of screened road planings.**

ANDY YOUNG PAVILION

Equipment & Furniture – Two years ago we reduced reserves by £2000 to £450 although it was agreed that reserves would be replenished at the next budget meeting. However, we have only added £200 pa since then giving reserves of £850. **Recommended to retain reserves but make no further budget.**

Footpaths & Car Park – We have £1920 in reserve and our ultimate aim is to tarmac the car park although this will cost a tremendous amount of money. **Recommended to retain reserves but make no further budget. (Recent proposals from Wiltshire Council regarding expansion of the school may have an impact on this budget heading)**

Maintenance/Repairs – We had large maintenance bills in 2017/18 & 2018/19 (boiler repairs and sewage pump repairs). Last year we agreed to budget a further £2000 and if we had no maintenance issues by October 2019 then we would ask local decorators for quotes and to carry out redecoration work (inside and out) before end of 2019/20 financial year. However, we ended up having to replace the boiler in 2019/20 and the cost was nearly £3,500. I have revised reserves at £500 and suggest we budget a further £2000 to get the place redecorated (inside and out). Also, I notice that one of the large windows has been broken (football), although it has only cracked the inside of the glass. **Recommended to retain reserves of £500 but reduce budget to £1000. Re-decorate if reserves are still available after the summer of 2020.**

BAND HUT – We did agreed to start building up reserves so that when the roof needs replacing we may have enough money to do the work. However, during the summer, members agreed to give the Railway Modellers Club £750 towards costs of replacing toilet. **Recommend – budget £750 to replenish reserves to £1500 for 2020/21 financial year.**

BOWLING GREEN – Members pointed out that the Bowls Club had their own lease and actively self-funded and managed the bowling green and facilities. **Recommend to remove reserves.**

BUILDINGS

Chapels – Last year it was agreed to retain reserves of £6150 and to budget a further £1000 for the chapels. Chapels in state of dilapidation/structural movement possible issue. Also have issue with windows that were damaged during break in. Insurance should pay for most of this work but one of the windows was broken prior to break in and should be repaired at the same time as the others. **Members recommended that the reserves should be reduced to £5000 and that the difference - £2150 – should be reallocated to the 'Jubilee Garden Walls & path' heading and that no budget should be made.**

Clock Tower – the Town Council spent nearly £16k refurbishing the Clock Tower during 15/16 financial year which diminished reserves. We spent £420 in replacing window this year and £195 on clock service. Reserves should be built back up again and now stand at £2675. Suggest budget a further £1000.

Clock Tower Island – Reserves now stand at £1090. Budget another £200 to add to reserves again? **Recommended to retain reserves and that no budget should be made. It was agreed that some repairs should be made to the Clock Tower island to reduce the trip hazard risk.**

Jubilee Garden Walls & path – they are in need of some work. Reserves currently stand at £1000 which should be sufficient money to repoint the walls. However, I have received a number of requests to resurface the footpath and this would cost considerably more money. Suggest budget a further £3000. **Recommended to amend reserves to £3125 (by diverting reserves from 'Chapels' heading) and to budget £3000 which should amount to sufficient funds to re-tarmac the path and, hopefully, also allow for the pointing of the walls.**

Pennybank Lane Walls – Two years ago it was noted that part of the brick wall on the eastern side of Pennybank Lane had been removed and replaced by a fence. Upon investigation it turned out that Mr. James Chalke had bought the property and had removed the wall believing it to be his. He said he has kept the brick and would be

happy for the Town Council to rebuild the wall?!? **Recommended to retain reserves of £2800 but make no further budget.**

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Vehicle & trailer – We purchased the Mitsubishi in 2015 for £5850. I have no reason to believe it is on its last legs but money should be budgeted for replacement in due course. The grounds staff have also identified a wish for an ATV like Gillingham Town Council has. Clive has got quotes for this and a new one would cost £13,252. However, we are confident that a good second-hand one can be purchased for £5-7k. **Members agreed that an ATV or Gator vehicle would be an advantage for the grounds staff and would make a positive difference to their work.**

Recommended to retain reserves of £5150 and budget a further £5000 and to purchase a good second-hand gator vehicle from a local dealer which may cost somewhere in the region of £8 – 9k.

Grounds machinery & equipment – It should be noted that if the ride-on mower or tractor need replacing then it would cost more than the reserves we have available (currently £12055). Suggest budget £3000 again this year to add to reserves. Committee agreed. **Also recommended that small trailer for gator vehicle be purchased.**

Office equipment – The Town Clerk's computer replaced in 2016/17 financial year and Clerks Assistants computer purchased in 2013/14 financial year. **Recommended too add £200 to reserves and to purchase a high-speed scanner so that staff can scan documents to operate a digital filing system.**

Seats & benches – the Town Council's policy is to have these donated. We have had one seat donated this year – one as a replacement on Castle Hill

Play Equipment for Castle Hill Play Area – The multi-play unit was purchased in 2014, using Policy R2 funds and the swings had been refurbished a few years prior. However, the low level wooden trailway is now quite old. Last year members agreed that funds should be budgeted in order to consider replacement in the future. It could be possible to use off-site S.106 funds for this. **Recommended to retain reserves of £2250 but make no budget.**

Outdoor Gym Equipment – The Clerk informed members that although there was an allocated reserve of £1120 from the Town Council's reserves, there was also a reserved allocation of £9634 in Policy R2 funds for this project which needed to be spent before 31.3.2020. **Recommend retain reserves of £1120. (Recent proposals from Wiltshire Council regarding expansion of the school may have an impact on this budget heading)**

Public Access Defibrillator – the old Public Access Defibrillator that was in Castle Street has now been serviced/refurbished and has a new cabinet and is installed in the telephone kiosk in The Square (which has also been repainted and refurbished). We should start building reserves to replace the two defibrillators we have at some time in the future. Suggest budget £250. **Committee agreed.**

Storage containers for grounds equipment/staff – as agreed at the November 2019 Town Council meeting. I have added £5000 to reserves for this. **It was pointed out that as the committee has now recommended to purchase a new gator vehicle, this will need to be stored somewhere and would necessitate the purchase of another storage container. Recommended to budget a further £2000 for a third storage container.**

Snow blade – Cllr. Jeans said that he was keen to see the Town Council make a contribution towards the purchase of a snow blade which could be given to a willing farmer to help clear the roads during snow weather. The Clerk expressed concerns over road clearance authorisation, insurance and liability. Cllr. R. Coward said that it would not be necessary to buy a snow blade as most farmers used a bucket on a telehandler these days but Cllr. Jeans pointed out that this would not be authorised by the Highways Authority as a snow blade without a rubber flange caused damage to the highway surface. **Recommend budget £250 to act as seed funding for a snow blade.**

CAR PARKS

Salisbury Street Car Park – Rates – the rates for the Salisbury Street Car Park include rates for the Public Toilets (I presume) – the rate bill says car park & premises. The Chancellor announced, in his autumn Budget speech last year that business rates on public toilets would end (something that NALC has been campaigning for). This measure needs new legislation so is unlikely to be put in place voluntarily by taxing authorities. Unfortunately, this was one of the bills that did not get through parliament this year owing to suspension of parliament so it is likely that we will have to pay the rates on the toilets again next year.

Maintenance – We have had some pointing work done to the walls around the Castle Street Car Park and this is going to cost us about £700 this year. However, A. McCann says that there is more work required which he reckons would cost about £500. This was very difficult to predict as with any stone wall project, the damage is not apparent until you start taking back the pointing and taking out stones etc. Anthony also said that the wall around the Band Hut needs attention but it is not immediately dangerous. Could do capping just to stop the water getting in which would cost approx... £200 or could repair whole lot which would cost £400-500. I suggest £1000 to add to reserves. **Recommended to retain reserves of £4200 and budget £500.**

CASTLE HILL

Flag Pole – Last year, Cllr. Jeans explained that the wire to haul the flag up the pole had broken and that the Town Council would need to find someone to put the new wire on. **It was also pointed out that the bearings needed flooding with oil. Cllr. Jeans said it is essential that the flag pole tips properly for safety reasons and that the white nylon cord needs replacing. Cllr. P. Coward said that he would be happy to arrange for Colin (his engineer) to take a look at the flag pole and see what could be done to make it safer. Recommended to retain reserves of £1025 and budget a further £200.**

Maintenance of Floodlight – **Recommend that reserves should be reduced to £120 which would be sufficient. Grounds staff to install new tube into floodlight to get it working again.**

Castle Hill Environment Plan/HLS Scheme – There are no reserves remaining. I am hoping that our grounds staff will have the opportunity to get onto the hills this winter to carry out some of the remaining work within the HLS Scheme. I can also report that the lady from Natural England walked around the hills last month and sent us an email to say how good it was all looking. (Unfortunately, this view was not shared with English Heritage). The Clerk explained that budget figure of £150 is to allow for water supply to trough for goats and minor fencing repairs.

CEMETERY

Rates – last year we were worried about a potential rate increase on the cemetery. Indications from the valuation suggested that they would increase significantly. We therefore budgeted extra in anticipation but our rate bill did not reflect this increase. Suggest we keep remaining funds in reserve and budget further £600. That way, if rates do increase, we should have enough to cover the costs. **Members disagreed and recommended that reserves remain to cover rates next year and no budget be made for unforeseen rate increase.**

Walls, railings & footpaths – The work carried out by the Youth Offenders Team on the railings a couple of years ago never got completed. The grounds staff carried out some refurbishment work on the main footpath two years ago at a cost of £850 and I am aware that they would like to extend this work further out to other footpaths within the old cemetery – time permitting. Suggest we add £500 to reserves of £1660. **Members agreed to retain reserves but make no further budget.**

NEW CEMETERY

New gates & drive – Last year members were reminded that the Town Council had aspirations of installing a driveway and new gates into the new cemetery in line with the driveway and gates to the old cemetery but that this would be an expensive project and probably not within reach given the current financial climate. However, it was agreed to retain reserves of £1000 and make no further budget. No budget again? **Members felt that the idea of gates and a drive was an unrealistic aspiration and that the budget heading should be amended to “new cemetery extension” with the funds being reallocated to allow for new fencing & hedging for the next extension to the new cemetery. It was agreed that the extension should be marked out and that the grounds staff should be asked to start mowing regularly to prepare it for use.**

Drainage & paths – It has been agreed to start rebuilding reserves for the next phase of necessary drainage & path works. We have £3500 in reserve. When do we anticipate having to carry out next lot of drainage/footpath work? Suggest budget £1500. **Committee agreed.**

CHANGING ROOMS

Electricity – Please remember that the office electricity supply (which provides heating as well as lighting/computer comes from the changing rooms supply as well as the MUGA lights) so this is not all football club usage. Increase reserves to £500 and budget £800. **Committee agreed.**

Gas – Two years ago the gas used in the changing rooms cost us £705. The football club are now training at Gillingham and I have noticed a reduction in the gas use. Would suggest that we reduce reserves and we reduce budget slightly to £500. **Committee agreed.**

Maintenance/Repair – Two years ago we removed £1000 from reserves leaving only £710. We had a minor water leak last year which needed repairing and we now have a new boiler service contract with Britchards. It would be nice to get the changing rooms decorated in the near future as ceilings are all flaking & peeling. Suggest we keep £1000 in reserves and budget a further £500 add to reserves to allow for maintenance/repairs and if enough left over towards end of financial year, we get some decoration done. (Perhaps this could be done under the same quotation/contract as the Andy Young Pavilion). **Committee agreed.**

Water & sewerage – as Gas above. I have noticed a reduction in water costs. Suggest we keep reserves and make no budget. **Committee agreed.**

Water testing – we are in communication with the schools' water testing contractors about providing a service for us for an annual check and risk assessment on the boiler. (Our grounds staff carry out regular weekly temperature tests). Suggest retain reserves. **Committee agreed.**

Croquet & Boules Club – I have retained reserves of £1500 as I am slightly worried about the future of the club and am concerned that the Town Council is going to be left with an area of land that needs maintenance. **As the Croquet & Boules Club had signed a new lease, members felt less concerned about the immediate future of the club and recommended to reduce reserves to £500**

DUCHY MANOR GROUNDS

Maintenance – We are responsible for the land down to the river at the bottom of the grounds, beyond the fence. A few years ago we got contractors in to come and do some maintenance work and tree thinning, scrub clearance. Suggest it probably ought to be done again. There are also issues regarding the wooded area in the south-east corner of the grounds and thoughts that clearance of that area would reduce the likelihood of this being used for unsavoury purposes. Contractors could clear that area as well. Retain reserves of £1980 and budget a further £200. **Committee agreed.**

EVENTS – Next year we will be celebrating the 75th Anniversary of VE Day (the end of World War II in Europe) between 8th & 10th May – the early May bank holiday has been moved to Friday, 8th May for this purpose & licensing hours have been extended for the Friday. I think that the official programme is beacons, last post, church services, bells & street parties etc. We may want to allocate some budget for this? - £300? **Committee agreed.**

FLORAL ENHANCEMENTS

The Clerk pointed out that floral sponsorship money only amounted to £680 and yet expenditure was £1995. **It was agreed that the Chairman should mention the need for more sponsorship in his next Mere Matters report.**

FOOTPATHS

Seed money to tarmac Burton Footpath – We have £1500 in reserve to act as seed money to tarmac Burton Path.

Fingerpost Signs – We have been successful in receiving a grant for £400 towards the refurbishment of one fingerpost sign this year. The grant will not quite cover costs so I suggest we budget £200 to cover extra costs. **Committee agreed.**

HEALTH & SAFETY

Tree Inspection – We paid £2000 for a professional tree inspection in 2017/18 financial year and we ought to have this done every 5 years, although, in theory, it shouldn't cost us as much as the first one did because the first one

entailed all the plotting & mapping, tagging & numbering etc. The next inspection report will be due in 2021/22. James has been on a visual tree inspection course and so is able to supplement the 5-yearly professional tree inspection and provide interim reports. Suggest we put aside £200 this year. **Committee agreed.**

HUNTSGATE (WALNUT ROAD) PLAY AREA – Last year, reserves were reduced to £1000 on the understanding that S.106 funding could be used for refurbishment of Walnut Road Play Area. I have a number of quotations for the refurbishment works – coming in at an average of £50k (some of them will be out of date now). **Recommended to retain reserves but make no further budget as S.106 funds will be allocated to this project.**

KINGSMERE/LONG HILL OPEN SPACE – Some of you may remember that when the Kingsmere estate was built and the open space was transferred to us, we were given a sum of money (as part of a S.106 agreement) to help us look after the land. This money has now been used up and so it will now be necessary to think about allocating funds and setting budgets for this land: Tree work, fencing & hedge cutting etc. **Committee agreed to budget £500 for tree works and £400 for hedge cutting.**

MUGA

Maintenance – The Town Council had spent £920 on repairing the fence following the damaged caused by a fallen tree limb. Suggest budget £750 to add to reserves of £835. **Committee agreed.**

Floodlights – You will recall that we installed 1 LED light to replace one of the floodlights three years ago and this had been pretty successful and the Council had agreed to continue this programme as and when the floodlights stop working. The LED light is still working well and the floodlight in the opposite corner is still working but will need to be replaced with an LED when it stops. The Clerk pointed out that it had been necessary to take urgent action and incur emergency expenditure on replacing the electrical boxes on the floodlights as they had rusted out.

Recommended to retain reserves of £750 as this should be sufficient to change the floodlight but to make no budget.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

I am not aware that the Neighbourhood Plan needs funding from the Town Council.

Payroll – to discuss at meeting under ‘CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS’

PUBLICITY/TOURISM PROMOTION

Website – it was felt that the website ought to be updated and more Town Council information should be made available on the website. There were also new accessibility requirements to be met. Suggest budget £300 to add to reserves of £230. **Committee agreed.**

PUBLIC TOILETS

Information - Update on lease – I have just heard back from our solicitors who have raised queries on the draft leases but I have yet had time to pass on these queries to Wiltshire Council.

Toilet Cleaning (extra deep clean) – **Recommended that the reserves be reduced to £500.**

Security – We budgeted money to provide CCTV in the car park on the public toilets last year but not had time to deal with this. I did get a quote from Partnership Security which came in at £945 for works & £70 for service contract. However, I think it may be better to do this when the toilets have been refurbished?!? Keep reserves of £1000. **Committee agreed.**

Water – costs were higher again this year. This could be because the battery unit on the urinal cistern had failed and urinals were flushing too frequently. Have now changed service contract on urinal unit to twice a year to avoid this happening again. However, another bill will arrive before end of financial year so have increased reserves to £1000 and budget a further £1500 for next year. **Committee agreed.**

Refurbishment Costs – Two years ago we agreed to budget £11,771 in order to allow for refurbishment costs as identified by local builders and also to replace the Wallgate wash units. Last year we added £600 to allow for inflation and I have put in another £1000 this year. Clive and I have been talking about the idea of having self-locking toilets (like Shaftesbury) that lock at night. **Committee agreed.**

Drainage Costs – have added £500 to allow for inflation. I have been reluctant to carry out any of this work without the lease in place – do you agree? **Committee agreed. Also suggested that it may be possible to claim on insurance for collapsed drains. (Need to find Abbotts assessment report)**

RECREATION GROUND

Play Equipment – Last year we added £500 to build up reserves for replacement play equipment and I pointed out that the multi-purpose unit with slide was now extremely old and had required a number of repairs in recent years. We now have reserves of £3130 which would not be sufficient to replace this unit. However, I think it possible that we could use some of the S.106 off-site funds towards replacing equipment in the Recreation Ground so you may not want to budget extra or you may even want to remove some reserves. **Recommended to retain reserves and make no budget.**

Skate Park Maintenance – The Clerk informed members that the skate park needed little maintenance although some hairline cracks had appeared but the grounds staff thought that they could fill these. **Recommended to reduce reserves to £400.**

Tennis Courts – We agreed, a few years ago, that we would continue setting aside some money to build up reserves for refurbishment of tennis courts in future. We now have £1600 in reserves. **Recommended to retain reserves and make no budget.**

Trees - Would like to retain reserves in order to get extra tree work done to crown lift the TPO trees on eastern boundary – both sides – so that farmer can get underneath with tractor etc. **Committee agreed.**

Car Park Repairs – suggest we get a load of road planings and see if we can level car park area a bit. Add £250 to reserves of £1350. **Committee agreed.**

Youth Club – We have had to spend some money on plumbing repairs to toilets. The toilets are causing quite a few problems in the Youth Club (nasty smells and leaks). Jacki has plans to extend and refurbish youth club and would like some seed money from Town Council. She would need, however, a longer lease and the Town Council has agreed that I should look into this with the Charity Commission. Considering that it is our building, I would think that the Town Council should put in a substantial amount of money to help towards the refurbishment/extension project and I have therefore allocated £8000 to add to the £2750 in reserves. **Cllr. R. Coward & Cllr. G. Jeans said that they are both committee members of the Forest Charity & Allotment Charity and that they were both optimistic that it would be possible to security grant funding from these charities for this project. On this basis, it was recommended that the Town Council should make a budget of £3250 to add to the reserves of £2750 thus enabling the Town Council go make a contribution of £6,000 towards this project.**

RIVERS

Some of the allocated reserve money is that which has been awarded to the Rivers Group as a grant.

SECTION 137

The limit of expenditure for S.137 during 2019/20 is £8.12 per elector (8.12 X 2392 = £19,423.04)

It was agreed to set the S.137 expenditure donations at the same level as last year with the following exceptions:

St. John's Ambulance – the Clerk pointed out that a request had been received from them to support the work they do in Wiltshire, where a donation of as little as £75 could help deliver treatment and training. **Recommended to budget £75 for a S.137 donation to St. John's Ambulance.**

Real Madrid Football Coaching initiative – the Clerk had received information on a draft proposal for the South West Wiltshire Area Board initiative for August 2020 whereby the area board councillors will consider (at the January meeting) a proposal to earmark funding to enable Parish Councils to create a scholarship for a young footballer to join this training event which will be held at the Nadder Centre, Tisbury. The course costs 235 euros (currently

£202.55) and SWW Area Board will provide monies towards each young person's entry fee but the remaining amount will need to be paid by the Parish Council. **Recommended to budget £250**

Area Board Support Grants – Retain reserves of £615 and budget a further £385 so that seed funding could be given to at least 4 applications.

CATG commitments/projects – the Clerk pointed out that the Town Council had recently agreed to fund £750 towards the dropped kerbs for Edgebridge and the CATG had subsequently requested a contribution of £500 for The Lynch width restriction project. Therefore she had revised reserves to £1250. The Committee agreed to budget a further £1000 to allow for future CATG projects, one of which could be a contribution towards a feasibility study to improve pedestrian safety for those people living on the northern side of Mere (north of Castle Street & Salisbury Street)

STREET CLEANING

Commercial Waste Collection – Wiltshire Council have contracted out this service and we now have a direct contract with Hills Waste. However, we are repeatedly being charged for excess weight. It is not a case that the rubbish won't go in the bin but a case that the weight of the rubbish is too much. We are working with Hills Waste and Biffa to get quotations and try and work out the most economical way of dealing with the problems but at the moment, it would appear to be cheaper to pay the excess weight charges than to have another bin and I think that even if we have another bin, we will still get excess weight charges. We will also then have a problem as to where to store the bins. Suggest we increase budget to £1500 for next year. **Committee agreed.**

WHITE ROAD GARDENS

Last year I reminded members that the reserves set aside for the White Road Gardens Play Area was a commuted sum from the developers to provide play equipment in the play area for the site. However, after consultation with residents once the development was built, it was clear that a play area was not desired in that location and it was felt that the Recreation Ground play area was within close proximity. The Clerk pointed out that the commuted sum had been reduced over the years on maintenance & grass cutting of the play area at White Road. The balance at present is £7990 I have had one resident of White Road Gardens approach me to say that they would like some play equipment for young children on the site?

NOTICEBOARD FOR TOWN CENTRE – it was agreed that reserves would be removed as this project had been in the pipeline for a number of years and not materialised.

RENTAL FOR STORAGE CONTAINERS – Cllr. Hazzard pointed out that he had made an offer to the Town Council that the storage containers could remain on his land at Townsend Nurseries until March 2020 free of charge. However, he was not in a position to be able to offer this site rent free on a permanent basis and would need to make a charge of £25 per container per week thereafter. Cllr. Hazzard declared a pecuniary interest in this matter and left the room whilst it was discussed. Members agreed that the Town Council should seek an alternative location to site the three containers. The Clerk pointed out that this was not easy as an electrical supply was essential and water supply desirable. It was therefore recommended that enough funding should be provided to allow for 6 months rental if necessary, but that steps should be taken to seek alternative land to site these containers. When Cllr. Hazzard returned to the room, members thanked him for his generosity in allowing the containers to be sited on his land until March 2020 rent free.

Night Silencer for Mere Town Clock – I have had a request from 'The George' to have chimes silenced at night as it disturbs their guests. We used to have a night silencer system but I guess this got removed when we had the automatic timing mechanism. Anyhow, we have had a quotation from Cumbria Clocks at £1315. **Recommended that this is not affordable in the current economic climate.**

Install EV charging point for car park – we have had a request, from the Doctors Surgery, to install an EV charging point for car park and also, I think that this would be a positive environmental move for the Town Council. I have made some enquiries and it would appear that the key issue with all these EV charging points is the electricity supply and it seems that most EV charger suppliers would insist on having a feasibility study done into how we can get the electricity in, where would be the best situation for the EV chargers and how many we would need now and in the future. The cost of the feasibility study is £250 and it seems that all the companies are going down this route now. Anyhow, as a rough guide the cost of a surface charger is £1750 and the average cost of installation is £1500 but obviously this is all dependent on how much groundwork is required etc. The charger would be a 7kw fast charger that is capable of charging two vehicles at the same time. There is government grants available called ‘On Street Grant’ but it is understood, from other town councils, that it is a difficult process (what a surprise!) **Cllr. Jeans said that he had been given the name of a company that supplied and applied for grants etc and he had made contact with them. Recommend budget of £250 to allow for feasibility study.**

SUCCESSION – The Chairman pointed out that it may be prudent to start building reserves in order to be able to act upon providing a successor for the Clerk when she retires. She has no plans to retire at the present time but it would be prudent to start this process now as it would be ideal for any new Clerk to have a year of transition into the job with the retiring Clerk. Recommended to budget £2000.

INCOME

Allotments – We sent a year’s notice to all allotment holders in March 2017 and a 10% increase was applied to all allotment rents w.e.f. March 2018. If we want to apply an increase we need to give 1 year’s notice. **Recommended to send out a year’s notice to all allotment holders in March 2020 to say that a 10% increase will be applied to all allotment rents w.e.f. March 2021.**

Cemetery (Burial fees & charges) – We increased all cemetery fees by 3% last year and so I have done the same again this year. **Recommended to increase all cemetery fees by 10%**

HLS Scheme – The Clerk reported that the annual payments would cease in 2021.

Sports Clubs fees – it has been previously agreed to apply a 3% increase each year but we should assess the levels of contributions. The Bowls Club did pay us a ‘one off’ donation of £500 last year towards extra expenses associated with the Andy Young Pavilion. **Committee agreed.**

CIL & Policy R2 – I have sent off a request to Wiltshire Council for an update on CIL receipts for MTC. Their spreadsheet only shows CIL receipt of £1833.15 for the Old Ship Hotel. I have queried why there is nothing shown for: house in Pettridge Lane, conversion of Methodist Church and also conversion of Lloyds Bank. The Clerk said that she had now received a response from Wiltshire Council on this and it seems that conversions of buildings do not qualify for CIL and also that self-build developments are also exempt from CIL although the Clerk was unsure of the definition of self-build. The Town Council was not due any further CIL receipts and the Clerk said that she was very disappointed about this as it meant that the Town Council would be far worse off under CIL than it would have been under Policy R2. Cllr. Jeans said that he would be taking this matter up with Wiltshire Council.