

Finance and Compliance Advisory Compliance Advisory Groups Joint Meeting 20 October 2020

Present: Cllrs Ashwell, Underwood, Studd, Millard, Howell-Jones, Hassall & Jones
Parish Clerk

Unavailable: Cllrs Scott & Burbidge

Meeting held using Zoom

PART 1: Finance Advisory Group Chairman Cllr S Ashwell Draft meeting notes

1. The budget proposal collated by Cllr Ashwell was reviewed by those present in their role as Chairmen of Buckden Parish Council's (BPC) Committees and Advisory Groups.
2. The budget proposal was presented as an excel spreadsheet containing information on the 2020-21 agreed budget and the detailed proposals submitted by Committee and Advisory Group Chairmen and the Parish Clerk (RFO). The detailed budget, showing changes from the current financial year was shared with all Finance AG members in advance of the meeting.
3. Following discussion in the meeting a proposal will be taken to full Council in November, alongside the proposed 2021-22 Budget, in relation to the funding for changes to the storage of BPC Handyman's equipment and working area.

ACTION SA

4. The budget proposal was reviewed in detail during the meeting using the Zoom screen sharing facility, with reference to row and columns and cells the multiple budget inputs were viewed simultaneously by all meeting participants. Supplementary information was provided where required on BPC activities where funds are already held as Earmarked Reserves e.g. Neighbourhood Plan for Referendum communications. Assumptions were questioned and clarification sought by all participants and agreement was reached on all aspects of the budget.
5. Particular points highlighted:
 - 5.1. The Income lines linked to activities and thus expenditure which may be affected by external circumstances are the Climate Change Mitigation event plans and the Marina Contract. However, this linkage secures BPC position overall, should these need to be amended in year to reduce expenditure if income is not secured to cover it.
 - 5.2. Office and meeting room rental values to be retained in the budget as future arrangements cannot be confirmed but provision needs to be made for 2021-22
 - 5.2.1. Office space will continue to be required, even if the Clerk undertakes more work from home in 2021-22; details of options will be kept under review by the Staffing AG and reported to Council for decision.

- 5.2.2. Meeting rooms hire for BPC is a block booking in order to secure an advantageous price. Further discussion will be held at Council as the situation around Covid-19 unfolds
- 5.2.3. Noted that we secured a £10,000 grant in August to help offset the impact of Covid 19 on BPC operational arrangements; that is in Earmarked Reserves and proposals for its use will be brought to Council for decision.
- 5.3. Printer replacement has been agreed by Council and an estimate for costs in 2021-22 was added; if further information is available before the budget proposal is submitted for the November Council meeting this line can be adjusted.

ACTION CU & RM

- 5.4. Electricity costs for street lighting (Diddington and Buckden) was discussed from both a cost and environmental impact perspective.
- 5.4.1. Agreed that there will be contact made to establish whether lights are on timers for switching off e.g. at midnight, to reduce cost for power and promote a dark-skies environment.

ACTION RM & SA

- 5.4.2. To explore with the CCC-appointed contractor whether all units can be converted for the purposes in 5.4.1 and to convert all to LEDs as a single contract. Noted that recent replacement of a single LED unit was about £500 and BPC is responsible for 33 lampposts.
- 5.5. Equipment purchases for handymen were discussed
 - 5.5.1. Some allowance was included in 2021-22 to supplement the Earmarked Reserves held as a contingency to be used if a major piece of equipment is beyond economic repair.
 - 5.5.2. The meeting explored currently recommended purchases and the merits of hire or buy were considered. *Post-meeting note: hire shops cater for the householder market. To date no rental options for a machine of the required capability and capacity could be found.*
 - 5.5.3. We were advised by Clerk and GP AG Chairman that there are advantages to purchasing a professional grade shredder ASAP to support the winter 2020-21 handymen work programme. This can be funded from current year funds and a paper will therefore be brought to Council for decision, including any further information available on possible hire. **ACTION RM & BM**
- 5.6. Noted that Cemetery Maintenance costs exceed income.
 - 5.6.1. Agreed that the condition of this village asset is reported as being an important issue for villagers and those who visit graves and memorials.
 - 5.6.2. Noted that the programme of major capital works had now been completed in the Cemetery
 - 5.6.3. Maintaining the grounds and paths, and making provision for specialist stability testing of memorials, is now the priority for the short and medium term
 - 5.6.4. It was confirmed that any work on trees in the Cemetery would be covered by the Rights of Way and Tree AG
 - 5.6.5. Agreed that the charges for the burials and internment of ashes will be reviewed again next April, for 2021-22 (as rates approved by Council for 2020-21). **ACTION RM& BM**

- 5.7. Contingency funds for Large-Scale Planning Committee to employ professional advisers, if needed were included at a level that allows action to be started urgently if required. Further funding would need to be approved by Council.
 - 5.8. The budget proposal to support the Highways and Sustainable Transport AG to take forward the activities agreed in principle by Council for 2021-22 (dropped kerbs and protecting them with double yellow lines) as either LHI or PFHI projects.
 - 5.8.1. These measures support the BPC priority to improve walking safety for those with reduced mobility, including those in wheelchairs and pushchairs.
 - 5.8.2. It was explained that the proposed budget was based on costs from 2020-21 LHI schemes in Huntingdonshire considered by CCC and took into account the likely score that an LHI bid for these changes might achieve.
 - 5.9. Creating a digital map of the Village assets can be delivered using 2020-21 funds.
6. Other matters relating to cash management by BPC in 2021-22
- 6.1. RESERVES
 - 6.1.1. Anticipated value of Reserves at year-end were discussed; it was confirmed that BPC is expected to be within the recommended range for the ratio of General Reserves to Precept for 2021-22.
 - 6.1.2. Apportionment of funds between General and Earmarked Reserves will be reviewed and recommendations for Earmarked Reserves will be updated in January 2021, so that we can explain why they are required and how they benefit our residents, before the new Precept is published by HDC.
 - 6.2. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)
 - 6.2.1. The payments of CIL income are held as Earmarked Reserves, as there are restrictions on how that money can be spent.
 - 6.2.2. The process has already been agreed for reviewing and prioritising proposals for the use of CIL money and testing their deliverability within BPC resources and powers. The management of CIL is tied into both the Neighbourhood Plan and the Community Action Plan. Next steps have been delegated by Council prior to decisions being made. **ACTION CU & AHJ**
 - 6.2.3. It was noted that Finance AG members would be keen to see that the spending of CIL is visible and benefits as many of our residents as possible, as all will be affected in some way by the development to which this payment is linked.

PART 2: Compliance Advisory Group Chairman Cllr C Underwood

Councillor email address

It was agreed, subject to confirmation by Cllr Duncan, that Parish Council emails should be published and to avoid 'phishing', scams etc change the '@' to 'at'. Subsequently Cllrs Hassall and Duncan emailed further information about the issue. In the light of the concerns raised the following proposal is made.

Proposal That the current Chair and Vice Chair will have their Parish Council email addresses published in the format: *acouncillor"at"buckdenpc.org.uk*. The information on the risks associated with having an email address on line will be circulated to all

Councillors. If a Councillor wishes to have their email address published, they should inform the Clerk by 30th November 2020.

Policies

- The AG noted the revision of the Complaints Policy to accurately reflect what happens if the Complaint is not upheld **ACTION RM**
- It was agreed that BPC should adopt the NALC Equal Opportunities Policy and bring for approval to full PC meeting in November. **ACTION RM/CU**
- FOI Policy Clerk and Chair working on this for presentation to full PC in December or January **ACTION RM/CU**
- Emergency contingency policy / Business continuity plan. Cllr Underwood to bring proposals to Council after reviewing national and local guidance and following CAPALC conference. **ACTION CU**
- GDPR compliance staged approach Clerk and Chair will review the Cybersecurity Check list first **ACTION RM/CU**
- It was noted that a Lone working policy is required. Cllr Ashwell provided a draft for revision by Clerk and Chair to present to full PC. **ACTION RM/CU**

Proposal To approve: Revised Complaints Policy, Equal Opportunit