
Report from Finance Advisory Group Chairman

1: BPC SMALL BUSINESS COVID-19 GRANT RECEIVED

In mid-August 2020 an email was sent to the Clerk's email address from Hunts District Council (HDC) which advised BPC that they had received new guidance from the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy which meant that Parish Councils were eligible for Small Business Covid-19 Grants.

The HDC email identified three Parishes with Cemeteries which had a business rates reference, including Buckden. Consequently, Cllrs Ashwell and Underwood worked together in the Clerk's absence to apply for the grant.

We received the £10,000 Small Business Covid-19 Grant within days.
Under emergency procedures this money was assigned as an Earmarked Reserve.

Proposal: That the Council agrees to hold this Covid-19 grant income as an Earmarked Reserve to be used when and if there is expenditure required to support local arrangements and requirements to deal with Matters arising from Covid-19.

This Reserve to be reviewed in February 2021 by the Clerk (as RFO) and Finance Advisory Group Chairman and a Report on the balance and proposed future use to be brought to the March Council meeting.

2: AGREEMENT OF NATIONAL LGA PAY SCALES FOR 2020-21 FINANCIAL YEAR

On 28th August 2020 CAPALC sent to the Clerk the new Local Government Association (LGA) pay scales, now that the national negotiations have been concluded.

The new pay rates apply from 01 April 2020 and therefore some back-pay is due to each of our employees i.e. the Clerk and three part-time handymen. The back pay will be organised through our payroll provider, Red Shoes, and reviewed as part of the Payments For Sanction verification process for confidential information.

The Cost-of-Living rise awarded to all staff, like BPC employees, on the LGA pay scales is 2.75% compared to 2019-20. In addition, the paid holiday allowance for staff with less than 5 years continuous service has been increased from 21 to 22 days pa.
As none of our employees are full time their holiday allowance is calculated in hours, using the CAPALC-recommended method, and in line with the LGA guidance.

These national increases are within the total financial allowance made for changes to staff terms & conditions when we set the 2020-21 Budget and Precept. There is therefore no unexpected cost-pressure.

Proposal: That the Council note the information on the new pay scales and change to holiday allowances and that these are within the planned staff budget for BPC in 2020-21.