
Report from Finance Advisory Group Chairman

Part 1: TO CONSIDER A CHANGE TO BASIS OF BPC PAYMENTS FOR VILLAGE HALL ROOMS IN 2021-22

In previous financial years the Village Hall Trust has provided BPC a discounted charge for a booking of up to 100 hours hire, irrespective of room(s) used. In 2021-22 the quoted charge was £735 (uplifted 5% over the previous year to cover inflation and additional direct costs including security) and this figure is in the budget.

- When BPC moved to on-line meetings under the relevant regulations and the Hall had to close due to Covid-19 this charge was not invoiced.
- As the Hall and Clerk's office re-opened on 19th July 2021 BVT suggested that BPC either receives a block booking charge, or pays residents' rates based on actual room use.
- The licences for two Zoom accounts has been renewed for a further year (beyond the end of the 2021-22 financial year).
- The VHT Administrator has provided cost details at residents' rates to end July 2021; these have not yet been invoiced or paid.
- The Finance AG Chairman has reviewed likely costs for Monthly Council meetings and a reduced number of other AG meetings to 31 March 2022.
- Anticipated costs, based on use patterns since 19 May 2021 when the option to hold Council meetings on line ceased, suggest that expenditure at residents' rates for rooms most commonly used will cost between £750 and £800.

It is currently not clear how many meetings will be held by preference, and where permitted by Regulations, using Zoom (Advisory Groups and some Planning meetings). Arrangements for face to face meetings over the coming winter may be affected by 'waves' of further Covid infections.

The Finance AG Chairman recommends that we pay in 2021-22 for meeting rooms as used.

It is expected that the Office space used by the Clerk will be charged quarterly. Last year this was £349.65 per quarter.

Proposal: That Council agrees to pay for Village Hall rooms used at the residents' rate on the basis of actual room use.

Proposal: That Council delegates authority to the Clerk and Finance AG Chairman to agree a rate for the use of Clerk's office space (including Wi-Fi & heating) to reflect the variable arrangements for time spent by the Clerk in the Office shared with the VHT Administrator.

Part 2: TO CONSIDER PAYMENT FOR NEW PLAY EQUIPMENT FOR AGE 12+ YEARS ON BVHT LAND, ADJACENT TO THE CURRENT PLAYGROUND

There was discussion and agreement in principle in July Council meeting for BPC to underwrite the cost of a Zip Wire and Bouldering Wall to provide play equipment for children over 12 (with a weight limit on users of the Zip Wire). At that meeting it was suggested that this might be funded from BPC CIL income relating to Lucks Lane housing.

This report covers the information gathered since that Council meeting relating to this equipment and a formal proposal for funding by BPC.

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PC owns, maintains, inspects and insures the current play equipment and the safety surface and low fence around the playground for children up to 12 years.

Direct purchases by BPC of the Zip Wire and Bouldering Wall (maximum about 2m high) by BPC would be consistent with the arrangement for existing play equipment and will be consistent with the priorities expressed by residents for the use of this BPC CIL money.

Purchase costs:

1. Zip wire: total cost £9,205 before discount & delivery
 - a. 25m steel cableway and access ramp and Installation
 - b. Safety Grass Mats x19 and installation
2. Bouldering Wall: Total cost £3,573 before discounts & delivery
 - a. 3 units Bouldering Wall each 2.5m single sided
 - b. Installation

Total purchase price (quotation 26April2021) £10,393.39 ex VAT

It is suggested that £1,500 pa should be included in the annual GP budget to cover costs for Maintenance/Repairs, Safety Inspections and insurance.

- The Clerk is requesting a specific quote from our insurers
- If the proposal to purchase and own/manage this equipment is accepted the in-year 2021-22 revenue costs could be covered from the Earmarked Reserve for Village Asset maintenance (see Appendix – Reserves at 01 April 2021)

Making the money go further: Purchase of this equipment directly by BPC could then be applied as the “match funding” requirement for the grant application made jointly by BPC with BVHT for additional equipment to meet the needs of older children, and so enable more equipment to be provided for the village than if only CIL funding was used.

Proposal: That Council agrees to fund purchase of the listed play equipment from existing CIL funds and to include recurrent revenue requirements in the budget for 2022-23.

Proposal: That Councillors and Officers will whenever possible seek to use CIL funding to match-fund grants and other income so that CIL funds go further than if used alone.

Part 3: TO NOTIFY YEAR TO DATE INCOME & EXPENDITURE BALANCES

Standing Orders require BPC expenditure to be shared with Councillors against budgets.

Budgets are set each year in November for both Income and Expenditure.

The attached **Appendix BPC_I&E balances 2021-22.pdf** shows the reconciliation for income and expenditure to 2021-22 for invoices paid up to 31st July 2021. At this point in the financial year a number of non-recurrent payments have been made (so far almost £12K in total) e.g. insurance £1,533, software & licences £500, internal audit fees £114, Subscriptions & Donations £5,800, Churchyard wildflowers and Cemetery £600, Hunts End grant - wildflowers and path, work to date £1,800.

The financial position at this point in the year does not reflect the expected end of year position other than we do not expect to overspend on any pre-agreed projects and we have Earmarked Reserves for work that had to be rolled forward from 2021-22 due to Covid.

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Part 4: TO NOTE WORK TO PREPARE THE BPC BUDGET FOR 2022-23

All Councillors are invited to share their ideas ASAP with relevant group chairmen, the Clerk and the Finance Advisory Group Chairman.

A summary of the current year's budget is available on the BPC website for reference https://buckdenpc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/Accounts-2021/BPC_Budget_2021-22_Summary.pdf

The Clerk and the Advisory Groups, through their Chairmen, will be reviewing potential projects and recurrent expenditure for the next financial year, to inform the Parish Council budget and consequently the Precept we request from Huntingdonshire District Council and ultimately from Council Tax payers in Buckden and Diddington.

Proposals for expenditure and/or income will be collated and presented to the Finance Advisory Group at its meeting on 26th October 2020. A proposed budget will then be brought to the Council meeting in November 2020 for discussion and final decisions.

At that time consideration will be given to both essential spending and priorities agreed by Council for changing and/or improving the services provided by and through the Parish Council, within the powers that parish councils have and/or by working with partner organisations.

Spending of the available Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) given by HDC in relation to the Bloor Homes development on Lucks Lane is managed separately, following the procedures previously agreed by Buckden Parish Council. That procedure ensures that CIL funds are only spent in line with legislative requirements and is accounted for separately each year, as required. Parish Councils have at least 5 years to spend CIL funds.

When considering budgets for 2022-23 Councillors, individually and within Advisory Groups, are recommended to review the proposals in the Community Action Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan, about priorities on which BPC has already consulted our residents. These are available, with supporting information, on the BPC website:

<https://buckdenpc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/NDP/Buckden-Community-Action-Plan-Final-June-2020.pdf>

https://buckdenpc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/NDP/2018_19-v017-Buckden-LCWIP-FINAL.pdf

https://buckdenpc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/NDP/Buckden_Neighbourhood_Plan_final-version_post_the_Referendum_17May2021.pdf