

GREAT BENTLEY PARISH COUNCIL**Finance Committee Meeting December 2021**

The Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of Great Bentley Parish Council held on Tuesday 14th December 2021 at The Community Resource Centre Plough Road Great Bentley Colchester CO7 8LG commencing at 10.00am

<u>PRESENT:</u>													
<u>CHAIRMAN:</u>	Councillor R Taylor												
<u>COUNCILLORS:</u>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Councillor Mrs P Dennitts</td> <td>Present</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Councillor L Edwards</td> <td>Present</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Councillor B Herbert</td> <td>Present</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Councillor K Plummer</td> <td>Present</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Councillor Mrs P Dennitts	Present		Councillor L Edwards	Present		Councillor B Herbert	Present		Councillor K Plummer	Present	
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Councillor L Edwards	Present												
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Councillor K Plummer	Present												
<u>CLERK TO THE COUNCIL and RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER:</u>	Mrs D Humphris												

<u>F12/21.13</u>	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> None	
<u>F12/21.14</u>	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:</u> Councillor Plummer declared a personal nonpecuniary interest in any matters relating to the Queen's Jubilee project as his wife is on the Village organising committee.	
<u>F12/21.15</u>	<u>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION</u> None present	
<u>F12/21.16</u>	<u>MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING</u> <u>RESOLVED (unanimously):</u> that the minutes of the Finance committee meeting held on 22 nd November 2021 (previously circulated) should be signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.	
<u>F12/21.17</u>	<u>ANNUAL BUDGET DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1ST APRIL 2022- 31ST MARCH 2023</u> Further to minute no. F11/21.10 members further reviewed the draft budget/precept recommendations, as following the November meeting it was apparent that no allowance had been made for new projects relating to Speed Indicator Devices and Traffic Calming which are expected to be delivered in the current financial year but for which there is no current budget allowance – therefore impacting the projected year end balance for the General Reserve account. Also, the station Car Park needs some work with regards to potholes and the proposed projects and earmarked funds for 2022/2023 would reduce the General Reserve balanced to an unacceptably low level. Further to this, the Tax Base figure has now been provided by Tending District Council which will allow accurate calculations of the Precept and cost to a Band D Taxpayer in the Village relating to the parish element of their council tax bills.	

	<p>Amendments to the draft budgets originally discussed at the November meeting were prudently and robustly reviewed by the Committee with a view to aligning the General Reserve Account to JPAG guidelines and ensuring that all services and village projects could be provided with adequate income from the precept to cover this.</p> <p>With inflation at the highest level for many years and taking into account the projects and plans that the Council are now undertaking for the Village, it was recognised that an increase to Council Tax bills would be needed and therefore a careful review of every budget item was undertaken, to keep any increase to the lowest possible level whilst enabling continuing provision of services to the Village, facilitating new projects and to ensure the Council meets its audit obligations with regards to General Reserves.</p> <p><u>a) CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR ADJUSTMENTS</u></p> <p>It was noted that projected expenditure to 31st March prepared by the RFO has been calculated to allow for the following expenditure in this financial year (i.e. spend by 31st March 2022) for which there was originally no budget allowance in the current year:</p> <p>£2000 spend on grants projects for the Queen's Jubilee (we are expecting an application for this amount)</p> <p>£3000 spend on annual Southside Track Maintenance</p> <p>£1000 spend on fly tipping</p> <p>£2500 repairs to Car Park surface</p> <p>£5000 purchase of Speed Indicator Devices</p> <p>£5000 LHP funding for Traffic Calming Measures</p> <p>Further to this the expected income has been reduced by £13000 due to less VAT recovery available than included in the budget.</p> <p>It was <u>RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND</u> that the budget for this financial year (2021/2022) be amended to include the items as detailed above.</p> <p>The effect of these current year adjustments will be to reduce the projected year end General Reserve account as at 31st March 2022 (see below viii General Reserves)</p>	<p><u>To Full Council for approval</u></p>
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b) EARMARKED RESERVES

It was recognised that initially proposed projects/earmark funds for 2022/2023 needed to be reduced to improve the General Reserve account, or the precept, and therefore the Council Tax cost to villagers would need to be further increased to accommodate these projects and ensuing discussions looked at where projects/costs could be reduced to reduce the burden on council taxpayers.

(i) Kerbing and Drainage

Members agreed that the proposed Earmarked funds for kerbing and Drainage of £10,000 should be cancelled since this project is subject to decisions and support by Essex County Council Highways and is unlikely to go ahead anytime soon.

(ii) Purchase of Tractor

Members agreed that the Earmarked funds for purchase of a new Tractor should be reduced from £35,000 to £25,000 as further economies needed to be made to increase General Reserves and it was felt that a suitable Tractor could be sourced for this lesser amount.

(iii) New Allotments Water Pipe

Members discussed the funds Earmarked for laying a water supply to the new Allotments site of £6,000. With a current allotment waiting list of just two people, it was considered that this project could be deferred for further consideration in 2023/2024 financial year. Funds set aside would be placed back into the General Reserve account alleviating the need to increase Council Tax bills to improve the reserves position. Of the £6000 earmarked, £1,000 of this was donated from CALA homes and it was agreed that the Council could afford to match this making £2000 set aside for this purpose this year which could be built upon in future years until sufficient funds were available to fulfil this project. The Clerk advised that there may also be options for grant funding which could be explored.

(iv) Southside Track

Initial budget discussions in November had set aside £25,000 for 2022/2023 budget year for this new project to find a long-term solution to the issues with the Southside Track. However, it was agreed that any improvements may need to be delivered in Phases and that for 2022/2023 financial year £18,000 would be set aside for Phase 1. It was understood that the Working Party may investigate the possibility of obtaining some funding from householders who would directly benefit from the planned

	<p>Less proposed earmarked funds £53960</p> <p>General Reserve on 31st March 2021 £42952</p> <p>Without the amendments to the proposed earmarks as detailed above this would reduce the General reserve to only £28541 which would not meet the minimum JPAG requirement for reserves.</p> <p>It was <u>RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND</u> that the General Reserve be maintained at a minimum of £42000 for 2022/2023, noting that this represents only around 4 months revenue expenditure. This should be reviewed for 2023/2024 with a view to increasing it to a level of at least 6 months revenue expenditure (approximately £65000 based on 2022/2023 projections)</p> <p>It was noted that new projects that have not already been budgeted for could only be taken forwards if there were underspends from other services or projects otherwise the effect would be to reduce General Reserves when the Council's plan is to increase these and improve the Council's financial situation.</p> <p>With this in mind, the Finance Committee agreed that they should meet quarterly to fully review, and monitor budget spend and reserves carefully throughout the year and report to the Council accordingly.</p> <p><u>(ix) BUDGET/PRECEPT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2022/2023</u></p> <p>It was <u>RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL</u> of the proposed budget for 2022/2023 as per Appendix 'A' resulting in a Precept on TDC of £127252 This would result in a cost to a Band D Taxpayer of £135.04 per annum which represents an increase of £28.04 per annum equating to 0.54p per week increase – 26.2% increase (From £107 per Band D household 2021/2022)</p>	<p><u>To Full Council for approval</u></p> <p><u>To Full Council for approval</u></p>
<u>F12/21.18</u>	<u>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION</u> None present	
<u>F12/21.19</u>	<u>DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING</u> The next meeting will be Tuesday April 12 at 10am to review year end figures and reserves.	<u>Clerk to book meeting room</u>
	There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 11.02 hours.	
	<u>Signed</u> CHAIRMAN: DATE:	