

The Lee Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of THE LEE PARISH COUNCIL (TLPC) held at The Lee Common Scout Hut on Tuesday, 11th January 2022 at 11.00am

Present	Councillor R Fowler (Chair)	RF
	Councillor A Weir	AW
	Councillor C Sully	CS
	Councillor C Little	CL
	Councillor C Perry	CP
In Attendance	Mrs H Farrelly (Clerk)	HF
Apologies	Bucks Councillor P Birchley	PB
	Bucks Councillor J MacBean	JM
	Bucks Councillor M Fayyaz	MF
	Councillor D Chinnery	DC
	Councillor S Moule	SM
Abbreviations	The Lee Parish Council	TLPC
	Great Missenden Parish Council	GMPC
	Little Missenden Parish Council	LMPC
	Buckinghamshire Council	BC

Agenda Number		Action	Item
1.	<p>INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY CHAIRMAN</p> <p>Councillor Fowler welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p>		
2.	<p>TO APPROVE BUDGETS FOR 2022/23</p> <p>Expenditure</p> <p>Councillors considered the likely expenditure for next year, taking into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a likely increase to the Clerk's rate of pay, with the current number of hours (12/week) being accurately reflected in the budget for the first time • the mid-year increase to insurance cover in 2021/22 being reflected in a higher annual premium than that in last year's budget • general inflation <p>Councillors also considered two areas of potential one off expenses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any costs associated with Land Registration. The proposed budget for Professional Fees therefore includes a notional £1500 to cover such expenditure. • Fencing of the unfenced allotment area: the Finance Group felt that the eventual cost of fencing could not be justified, and that an alternative source of funding is likely to be needed if a decision is taken to go ahead. However, TLPC may need to make a contribution towards the fencing, and it was felt that a maximum of £1500 was an appropriate 		

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	<p>cap. The proposed budget for the Allotments therefore includes a sum of £1500 to cover such expenditure.</p> <p>Last year's costs for grass cutting by All Seasons were £3805 and the estimate for 2022 has not yet been received. Since the Finance Group reviewed the proposed budgets, a quote has however been received from Chesham Town Council (CTC) to carry out this work. The CTC quote is more expensive at £4805+VAT, although it includes costs for weed killing around playground equipment and strimming between allotments each month, neither of which is currently done by All Seasons. As it is necessary to approve the budgets for 2022/23 before councillors will have the opportunity to consider which contractor offers the better value for money, the proposed budget for grass/hedge cutting, gates and benches has been increased to a level which would not preclude the awarding of the contract to CTC. The VAT budget has also been adjusted accordingly.</p> <p>The proposed expenditure budget for 2022/23 is therefore shown below:</p>					
	2021/22		2022/23			
Item	Budget	Projected	Budget	Notes		
EXPENDITURE						
VAT	297.00	370.09	1,960.00	Based on last year's anticipated spend, plus VAT at 20% on grass/hedge cutting should the contract be awarded to a VAT registered contractor, plus potential one off costs of £1500 for each of allotment fencing and legal expenses, and rounded up to allow for inflation on miscellaneous underlying costs		
Administration	820.00	1,118.31	700.00	2021/22 included election expenses which won't recur. Costs for forum email and newsletter donation moved to Communications in 2022/23		
Clerk's salary/allowance	5,886.00	7,789.23	8,200.00	Clerk's hours increased after budget was set account for overspend in 21/22. 2021/22 projected figure doesn't include uplift (not yet agreed by unions) backdated to April. 2022/23 figure includes potential further uplift (based on notional 2% p.a. in 21/22 and 22/23) plus an allowance for employer's NI (including the new health levy) on any backpayments		
Grass/hedge cutting/gates/benches	4,600.00	3,675.00	5,500.00	Although 21/22 budget was underspent, the budget has been increased for this year to allow for a potential change of contractor.		
Playground	1,517.00	1,234.89	1,517.00	Although 21/22 budget was underspent, see no reason to reduce it for 2022/23		

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					Although 21/22 budget was underspent, see no reason to reduce it for 2022/23. It now includes an additional £1500 towards fencing costs which is unlikely to be sufficient for the required fencing, so alternative funding will be needed to cover the shortfall; this is however the maximum felt to be appropriate to be paid from the precept and reserves.	
	Allotments	513.00	356.64	2,013.00		
	Subscriptions	256.00	247.64	275.00		
	Insurance	820.00	984.83	1,100.00	Insurance cover increased mid year in 2021/22, 2022/23 assumes that level of cover for a full year plus an allowance for inflation	
	Professional fees	623.00	245.00	2,123.00	Basic budget unchanged, but includes £1500 towards legal costs associated with land registration	
	Other asset maint.	410.00	715.00	500.00	Modest increase on 21/22 budget, overspend due to work on war memorial which won't recur this year	
	Communications			400.00	New category. £270 for newsletter (increased from £250 in 21/22), £80 for forum email costs plus a small allowance for other printing/distribution costs	
	Total Expenditure	15,742.00	16,736.63	24,288.00		
	<p>Income</p> <p>Moving to income, the increased VAT costs will be fully recouped and are therefore not strictly relevant in terms of net expenditure.</p> <p>It is proposed that allotment fees be increased from £22 to £25 and expected that wayleave income will remain unchanged. Councillors agreed to this increase.</p> <p>Councillors approved the budget for 2022/2023.</p>					

3	<p>TO APPROVE PRECEPT FOR 2022/23</p> <p>Based on the figures shown above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • income before precept: £2,503.90 • expenditure: £24,288 • net expenditure: £21,784 <p>Were TLPC aim for a fully balanced budget, this would require a precept of £21,784 – an increase of 45% on 21/22. Although it could be explained, it is felt that such an increase is excessive – not least as £3000 of expenditure is in respect of discretionary one-off costs that may not materialise.</p> <p>It is therefore agreed that the precept for 22/23 be set at £19,000.</p>					
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Notes:

1. This figure represents an increase in simple terms of 26.66% (increase of 4000 from 15000 to 19000).
2. Had the increase in Clerk's hours been included in the 21/22 budget, the precept would most probably have been 17000 and the increase would then fall below 12% (increase of 2000 from 17000 to 19000).
3. Although the proposed level of precept results in a deficit budget, the deficit is completely accounted for by the inclusion of contingent one-off discretionary expenditure on fencing and land registration costs. As far as day to day costs are concerned, the budget is balanced.
4. Should the discretionary one-off costs materialise, they can be fully met by taking money from the general reserves.
5. A deficit has been incurred in 21/22 and may also arise in 22/23 if the potential one-off costs materialise. A further increase to the precept above the rate of inflation is likely to be needed in 23/24 in order to restore the reserves to the target level of 50% of the precept.

The full budget for 22/23 is shown below, with comparison to 21/22 for reference.

	2021/22		2022/23	
Item	Budget	Projected	Budget	Notes
INCOME				
Precept	15,000.00	15,000.00	19,000.00	
VAT Refund	297.00	370.09	1,960.00	Based on last year's anticipated spend, plus VAT at 20% on grass/hedge cutting should the contract be awarded to a VAT registered contractor, plus potential one off costs of £1500 for each of allotment fencing and legal expenses, and rounded up to allow for inflation on miscellaneous underlying costs
Allotment fees	420.00	440.00	500.00	Rent increased from £22 p.a. to £25 p.a.
Wayleaves		43.90	43.90	
Total Income	15,717.00	15,853.99	21,503.90	
EXPENDITURE				
VAT	297.00	370.09	1,960.00	Based on last year's anticipated spend, plus VAT at 20% on grass/hedge cutting should the contract be awarded to a VAT registered contractor, plus potential one off costs of £1500 for each of allotment fencing and legal expenses, and rounded up to allow for inflation on miscellaneous underlying costs
Administration	820.00	1,118.31	700.00	2021/22 included election expenses which won't recur. Costs for forum email and newsletter donation moved to Communications in 2022/23

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	Clerk's salary/allowance	5,886.00	7,789.23	8,200.00	Clerk's hours increased after budget was set account for overspend in 21/22. 2021/22 figure doesn't include uplift (not yet agreed by unions) backdated to April. 2022/23 figure includes potential further uplift (based on notional 2% p.a. in 21/22 and 22/23) plus an allowance for employer's NI (including the new health levy) on any backpayments	
	Grass/hedge cutting/gates/benches	4,600.00	3,675.00	5,500.00	Although 21/22 budget was underspent, the budget has been increased for this year to allow for a potential change of contractor.	
	Playground	1,517.00	1,234.89	1,517.00	Although 21/22 budget was underspent, see no reason to reduce it for 2022/23	
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	Subscriptions	256.00	247.64	275.00		
	Insurance	820.00	984.83	1,100.00	Insurance cover increased mid year in 2021/22, 2022/23 assumes that level of cover for a full year plus an allowance for inflation	
	Professional fees	623.00	245.00	2,123.00	Basic budget unchanged, but includes £1500 towards legal costs associated with land registration	
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	NET UNDERSPEND / (OVERSPEND)	(25.00)	(882.64)	(2,784.10)	21/22 was initially projected to overspend by 1903.23 due to the increase in Clerk's hours after the budget was set. Underspend in other areas has currently reduced this to under £900, although the Clerk is due an adjustment backdated to April for the 2021/22 pay settlement which has not yet been agreed and announced. The proposed increases in precept and allotment rents for 22/23 will cover increased regular costs but will not however cover the potential one-off spends on legal expenses and fencing, both of which (if required) will be met from reserves to minimise the increase to the precept.		
4.	<p>TO DELEGATE DECISION MAKING POWERS TO THE CLERK, BASED ON DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ONLINE MEETINGS</p> <p>The Lee Parish Council feels it inappropriate to hold public meetings in person in view of the current levels of Covid infection, however current legislation does not allow councils to make any decisions other than at face to face meetings.</p> <p>Having consulted with NALC (via BALC) and the Monitoring Officer at Buckinghamshire Council, it is felt that the best solution is for the council, at a face to face public meeting, to make a decision to delegate future decision making powers to the Proper Officer (the Clerk). The Clerk will make those decisions based on consultation with councillors and members of the public at online meetings.</p> <p>Although councillors can revoke such delegation at a future face to face meeting, it does not seem appropriate for such delegation remaining in force either for an extended period without review, or for longer than intended.</p> <p>It is therefore agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making powers be delegated to the Proper Officer with immediate effect • Such delegation will remain in force until revoked at a future face to face public meeting of the Parish Council For so long as delegated powers remain in force: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there will be an agenda item at all future online meetings to note such delegation • there will be an agenda item at all future face to face meetings, to either note or revoke such delegation 						

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standing orders be updated to take account of such delegation procedures.		

