

Financial report for 2021/22

The financial year 21/22 was the first proper year of the Parish Council getting back to normal and for the unitary authority and all its different departments that we work with also becoming more active and supportive. Projects which had been considered before the pandemic and lockdown started to move forward. Due to COVID some of the necessary tree work on the allotments, the burial ground and the Pedestal Playing Field had not been completed hence a reduction in the end of year balance.

We started the financial year with an opening balance of £29,531.46 and have finished the financial year with a balance of £27731.36 .

Administration covers things like £1000 per annum to insure all the parish council assets, e.g. the street lights, defibrillators, play equipment, gates, signs. Administration also includes the Clerks salary, software, telephones, the audit, stationery, training and subscriptions to organisations which can help us carry out our role. By changing our phone system we have gone from £1011 last year to £300 this year.

We donated £300 towards the maintenance of the village clock.

As with all organisations and businesses we must pay into a pension scheme and currently the Parish Council has to pay 25.10% of the Clerks salary each month. During the year we had elections for Parish and Buckinghamshire Councillors, and this cost us £1375.

We also completed the conversion of all the street lights owned by the parish council, and this kept our energy cost to £920, it was £919 the previous year and had been £2000 per year before this.

Our budget is worked out and discussed and agreed in December each year, I had allowed an increase to £1500 for lighting but we now know that it will be in the region of £2800 for each of the three coming years. At least by converting to LED it is not as high as it could have been.

All our allotment plots have tenants and this brought in £570 from allotment rents, however the cost of the water and general maintenance means we run the allotments at a loss but we know that the allotments have provided a peaceful haven for many people and they are a 'service' we are proud to provide our residents. The allotments and the burial ground are costs to the parish council in order that we can supply a service to our residents and in both cases the running costs will always be more than our income.

The burial ground figure is higher than the previous year as the delayed tree work came into this year as well as the beginning of the expenditure needed for the Community Orchard. Future budgets will have a separate heading and budget for the Community Orchard We have been helped tremendously by volunteer work and subsidised costs from the Chiltern Rangers as well as help from Year 5 children from our school and The Chilterns Conservation Board who supplied us with trees, plants, seed and the owl and small bird box kits for £175 at a value of £1150

The Pedestal Playing Field is also a very valuable asset to this parish with hundreds of play hours for the children of this community and those in adjacent parishes. This year, after receiving the annual inspection report for the play equipment we spent

money on replacing three of the swings and after a tree safety report a further £4000 was spent on tree work. We are about to carry out maintenance on the car park – through lockdown it was extremely heavily used by visitors who wanted to walk in the area and with the garden centre car park now charging we have seen an increase in use by walkers.

We pay to have the verges within the 30mph speed limit cut, trees cut back over lights and the pelican crossing and over pavements. We also look after the areas by the Pedestal Roundabout, Cutty Alley, Park Farm Road, Rosemary Close and Portway Drive as well as both ends of Towerage Lane. We pay the Chiltern Society to clear four of our footpaths; we pay a contractor to spray weed killer along the road/pavement edges. Currently, and for the next year, we get £2033 from Buckinghamshire Council towards this work but it costs far more than we receive from them. As Simon has mentioned we have money put aside to pay for the feasibility study carried out on traffic in the High Street.

We ensure that we have our Christmas trees lit and support the Village Clock. We keep our defibrillators maintained.

We pay £1200 for dog waste bin emptying and this price will probably increase.

Our two solar powered Speed Indicators in Chorley Road are now out of warranty and we have therefore had to pay £600 to set up an annual maintenance contract.

As a parish council we are allowed to claim back all the vat we pay out. . We have claimed back £4145.75 back from HMRC VAT payments this is quite high due to the expenditure on the heritage lighting project and the replacement play equipment and all the tree works.

By careful management we have a secure financial position, and it was therefore agreed to reduce our Precept, which is the Parish Council element of the Council Tax. It was taken down by 1.6% to £43,500.

As mentioned we set our budget in December for the coming year and for 2022/23 we reduced our precept to £42,500 as we felt that families would be watching their finances very carefully in the coming year. We have had to revise our budget as we now have the potential costs for implementing the High Street feasibility study and also the incredible increase in electricity neither of which we were aware of when we had to set our precept and budget. We will be watching our expenditure closely and for the first time may dip into our reserve to pay for everything we would like to do for the benefit of this community.