

NORTH CRAWLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Notes on Budget Meeting held on Tuesday 15 November 2022 in the Institute

Present: Councillors Steve Garner (in the Chair), Sue Garner, Derek Harpur, Terry Smith and Jan Weatherley; Sheila Bushnell (Clerk and RFO)

Apologies: Councillor Gary Baxter

The meeting had been called to discuss the budget for 2023/2024

The Clerk had previously circulated a spreadsheet detailing the current financial position and the outturn for the end of the financial year on 31 March 2023.

Following consideration of each budget heading, it was decided that some of the headings would remain at the same level for the next financial year, except for the following:

EXPENDITURE:

- **Landscape contract:** The amount in the budget was increased to match the contracted amount from RTM Landscapes following the tendering of the new contract (£8,625).
- **Seat Maintenance/Replacement:** It was agreed that the same amount would be included for this heading and that another survey on seats and benches would be carried out to ascertain the work that was needed.
- **Notice Boards:** A budget of £100 was included to allow for the refurbishment of the notice board on the Institute wall.
- **Emptying Dog Bins contract and Village Warden Equipment:** £1,400 was agreed which allowed an increase of £200 above the amount currently being paid to Marcus Young Environmental.
- **War Memorial maintenance:** The amount in the budget was to remain at £100 to include the costs of the Village Warden carrying out light cleaning of the memorial. It was noted that comments had been received at Remembrance Sunday that there was moss growing on the memorial. The Clerk agreed to look further into this.
- **Playground equipment and maintenance:** It was agreed that an amount of £1,989 would be included in the budget for maintenance of the equipment - £1,219 (£770 adventure park; £449 zip wire) plus an estimated £770 for maintenance of the children's play park.
- **Cemetery Management:** The Clerk reported that £1,022 was unspent within the current year's budget but had been included as a commitment. It would make sense that both the Cemetery and the Accounts software were included in the same cloud-based solution so that there was integration between them, e.g., raising invoices for cemetery fees that would then link through to the Accounting software. The cost for the Rialtas cloud software was £25.92 per month and it was agreed this amount would be included as a budget figure for next year. However, if the cloud-based solution was taken forward, the £1,022 commitment in the current year would be likely to be replaced by a lesser figure, e.g., £25.92 x 3 months (January – March 2023).
- **Clerk's and Village Warden's salaries:** The April 2022 national pay award had recently been applied and the figures in the budget were based on these increased salaries. A further 2% increase on to both salaries was also agreed in anticipation of the April 2023 award.
- **Payroll Software:** The budget figure for the Sage payroll software was increased from a monthly charge of £7 per month to £8.50 per month. There had been no increase applied for two years and it was felt this must be due.
- **Accounting Software:** Following the failure of the laptop hard drive in October, and the subsequent need to re-install the Rialtas Alpha software and restore the back up, it was agreed

that a cloud-based version of accounting software was used going forward. The cost of this with Rialtas would be £20.25 per month but the Clerk felt that a better software solution would be to transfer to the cloud-based Scribe software which had a more modern interface and more support and training included in the price. The cost of this was currently being investigated but it was agreed that in the meantime the above costs would be included in the budget.

- **Website maintenance and email addresses:** An amount of £550 was agreed for email addresses and website support.
- **Insurance:** It was agreed to include an amount of £1,500 for insurance, excluding the amount for the cricket nets which was reimbursed by the cricket club. There was a discussion as to whether to go out to tender for insurance costs. It was acknowledged that this might not be necessary as a broker that specialised in local council insurance was currently being used. The Clerk would however send through details of another insurance company that she was aware of.
- **Bank Account and Barclaycard service charge:** This amount would be increased to £114 to reflect actual costs.
- **IT Equipment:** The Dell laptop support subscription and the McAfee computer virus protection fee were valid until April 2025 and April 2023 respectively. £100 was agreed in the budget for McAfee and £100 for Microsoft Office 365. The Clerk reported that the laptop battery was failing in that it did not hold its charge for long, and an amount of £150 was agreed for a replacement battery to be purchased when the current battery was no longer viable. However, the recent failure of the hard drive had been concerning and stressful for the Clerk. Following discussion, it was agreed to include £1,000 in the budget as an Ear-marked Reserve for the replacement of the PC laptop to upgrade it to one that was more reliable and was faster. This would take place at an appropriate time and would then make replacement of the battery unnecessary.

INCOME:

- **Cemetery fees:** A budgeted amount of £6,000 was agreed. The Clerk agreed to produce a comparison of the current fees being charged with those at Olney for the January PC meeting.
- **Interest from Bank Accounts:** Following the recent increases in the bank interest rate and the opening of a second account which attracted interest, it was agreed that an amount of £70 would be included in the budget.

SMB/4.12.22