

WALDRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Budget Setting Meeting of
the Waldridge Parish Council
held on 1 November 2018 at 7.00pm**



Present: Councillors - Bell, Davies, Foster, Hollingsworth, Sexton and Warren.

Also in attendance – Sarah Wilson - Parish Clerk, Brian Laidler - Caretaker, and 1 member of the public.

1. **Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Apologies for Absence:**

Cllrs Corner, Harding and Howie submitted their apologies.

3. **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

No members declared an interest.

4. Budget and Precept

a) **Review of current year's budget**

Councillors reviewed the current year's budget and spend to date.

Resolved: *It was agreed that unspent budget from projects that have come in under anticipated spend should be reallocated to those which are forecast to require additional funds (£1000 from Contingency to Play Area, £800 from Wifi/white board to Upgrade Rooms, £800 from Data Protection Officer to Upgrade Rooms, £900 from Streetlighting 10 Year Plan to Upgrade Rooms). It was also agreed to reallocate £600 from Repairs/Sundries to Fuel & Broadband, as the spend for Gas and Electricity was considered to likely come in higher than previously anticipated. A previously discussed, an amount of £75 from Contingency to Halloween was agreed.*

b) **Reserves**

The Council discussed the recommendation from the external auditor in relation to the minimum and maximum funds that must be held in reserve.

Resolved: *It was noted that the Council must hold a minimum of 25%, and a maximum of 115% of precept in reserve. To ensure that the Council meet the minimum 25% for the current financial year, it was agreed that various unspent budget amounts would be reallocated to a new 'Reserve' heading. The Clerk will make the changes requested and redistribute the updated 2018/19 budget to Councillors.*

c) **Quotations policy**

The Council discussed the requirements for obtaining quotations and estimates, as outlined in the Financial Regulations, and the processes that must be followed when making purchases and engaging services. In relation to the ordering of bedding plants and watering services, advice provided by CDALC, Mazars and DCC was discussed. The Council requested that future audit reports should be made available to them.

Resolved: *It was noted that for all items above £100 and below £3,000, three estimates must be obtained, and for items above £3,000, and below £10,000, three quotes must be obtained, with it being the responsibility of the Clerk/RFO to obtain quotes and estimates. It was also noted that where it is not possible to obtain three quotes or estimates, justification must be provided. The Council also noted that bedding plants and watering services must be treated as an annual contract and must be quoted for as such in the future. It was further noted that it is not common business practice to pay for such services upfront. It was agreed that the Clerk should distribute future audit reports to the Council when they are received.*

d) **Precept**

The Council considered information provided to them in relation to the precept levels for Waldrige Parish, and the rest of County Durham, and the precept charges per elector for both Waldrige Parish, and the rest of the County. The possibility of raising the precept was discussed, and the potential implications of this were considered.

Resolved: *It was noted that there has been no increase to the precept for several years. It was agreed to defer the setting of the precept level until the budget for next year has been further discussed, as it is this that will determine the precept level.*

e) **Income**

Room hire charges for the newly refurbished Parish Rooms were discussed and hire charges for similar venues in the area were noted.

Resolved: *It was agreed to increase the room hire charges as follows: £5 per hour for regular use; £10 per hour for one-off use; and £15 per hour for parties, all to include use of the kitchen facilities. It was agreed that current regular users will be given a notice period before their room hire charges increase.*

f) **Next year's budget**

The draft budget of essential items was distributed by the Clerk for discussion, and a draft projects budget was discussed and formed. Budget items where savings could potentially be made were identified.

Resolved: *It was agreed that the Clerk should look into the following in preparation for further discussion of next year's budget: the possible saving to be made by switching gas and electricity supplier; having a water meter installed at the Parish Rooms; obtaining quotes for internal audit services; contacting recent event attendees and members of the Facebook group to ask whether they would like to receive e-clippings; to work with the Caretaker to obtain quotes for an annual maintenance contract for the Millennium Green. The Clerk will make all discussed updates to the draft 2019/20 budget and distribute to Councillors ahead of further discussion at the next meeting. The Council's Campaign for Rural England membership to be placed on the next agenda for discussion.*

g) **Action Plan**

The Action Plan was discussed in relation to the setting of next year's budget.

Resolved: *It was agreed to defer the updating of the Action Plan until a further discussion of the budget for next year takes place.*

h) **Three-year budget**

The Three-year budget was considered by the Council.

Resolved: *It was agreed to defer the setting of the Three-year budget until next year's budget is agreed upon.*

i) **Debit card**

The possibility of acquiring a debit card for purchases was considered.

Resolved: *It was agreed to acquire a debit card for the current account.*

j) **Microsoft Office 365 subscription**

The Clerk requested that the Council approve the renewal of the Microsoft Office 365 subscription at a cost of £59.99 for the year. It was noted that this software package contains programs that are essential for the Clerk to be able to carry out her duties.

Resolved: *It was agreed to renew the Microsoft Office 365 subscription at a cost of £59.99 for the year.*

5. **Date of Next Meeting**

13 November to commence at 7.00pm.

The meeting terminated at 10.00 pm

Chairman
Date