



# Ashington Parish Council

## Finance Committee Meeting

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### **Minutes of Ashington Parish Council Finance Committee Remote Meeting held on 7.45pm on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

Present: Councillors N. Spiers, G. MacPherson, M. Woolley & T. Moss

Parish Clerk: Karen Dare

Apologies: T. Watson

Declarations of Interest: None

Members of the public: None

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the draft budget as prepared by the RFO for the financial year (2021/2022). The budget had been circulated to all Councillors prior to the meeting and questions/comments were invited.

The highlights are:

1. Budget deficit (Expenditure less Income) is @£15k
2. Reserves are currently @11 months of Expenditure (recommended levels are 6-12 months)
3. The Clerk presented her overtime statistics and recommended that working hours are increased from 15 per week to 18 but with a smaller overtime budget available.
4. The Youth Worker budget should be increased slightly as it had remained the same since a Youth Worker was first employed some years ago.
5. If expenditure remains as predicted, then reserves will fall below the minimum recommended level in 3 years' time. Increasing the Precept would mean that Reserves last longer.
6. Income has reduced because of the loss of Ashington Autos from The Parish Yard but there is potential to gain income from renting out the site long term although the rental amount is currently unknown.
7. The Parish Yard budget from 2020-21 has @£8k unspent and there is an outstanding S106 grant application at HDC for £5k. Until tenders are received (due by 1/1/21) the Council will not know the future costs/income from the site.
8. The Parish Precept has not risen since 2017, therefore it has not kept pace with inflation. Residents have benefitted from this, but it may not be possible to continue like this.

9. The Parish Council has not received any Covid funds from District or County Councils even though they have received funds from Govt. and were due to pass it down.
10. Ideally, the Parish Council would have a balanced budget where income matches expenditure but, whilst aiming to reach this point, reserves must be used.

Councillors were very aware that this has been a difficult year financially for many Ashington residents, with job losses, furlough etc. Incomes have been squeezed.

A 'Band D' household in Ashington pays £88.71 Parish Precept so even a 5% rise in Precept would only amount to £4.44 extra per annum, not even the cost of a pint of beer.

Councillors agreed that:

1. The budget is accepted as presented
2. Clerks working hours to increase to 18 per week from 1<sup>st</sup> April.
3. The deficit is funded from reserves
4. The Parish Yard income should be maximised to fund the budget deficit, possibly a hub of activities on site bringing in income.
5. The Neighbourhood Plan referendum is funded from the Election fees reserve
6. A newsletter article explaining this to residents should be prepared.
7. The Parish Precept should not increase at all (0%)

Meeting finished at 8.25pm

Signed.....

Date.....