



## Ashington Parish Council

### Finance Committee Meeting

---

#### **Minutes of Ashington Parish Council Finance Committee Meeting held at 8.00pm on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

Present: Councillors: M. Woolley, N. Spiers, G. McPherson, T. Moss  
Clerk & RFO: K. Dare  
Apologies: T. Watson  
Members of the public: None  
Declarations of Interest: None

Councillors met to discuss the preliminary budget figures provided by the RFO. The RFO had prepared a budget for 2020/21 that took into account the likely cost increases for existing services and additional budget needs.

The highlights are:

1. Income remains approximately the same for next year. The Council does face significant loss of income if Kite & Thomas decide to vacate the 'green shed' land on London Road. This would reduce income from @£13k to @£6k and the Council would have to rely on reserves to meet the income shortfall.
2. Expenditure will increase slightly because the PC is potentially facing increased costs for: staff, litter & dog bin emptying and general increases to all services
3. In order to offset the additional expenditure the RFO has reduced other budgets (highlights):
  - a. Litter Warden budget of £2000 has been removed as the Wardens are dealing with litter around the village plus there is an HDC 'Adopt a Street' initiative.
  - b. Youth fundraising match-funding has dropped from £2000 to £1000
  - c. IT budget of £1500 reduced to £1000 as new equipment was purchased in 2019 and will not need replacing for a few years
  - d. Grants budgets have not been re-instated

4. The Clerk suggested that her working hours are reduced from 20 hours per week to 15 hours but with the ability to claim modest overtime if it is necessary. Having resumed the Clerk's role in early 2019 the Clerk has sorted out some time-consuming issues and stripped back the work to only that which is necessary. This was agreed and the budget set at £20k salary cost + £5k overtime.

5. Taking all of the above into consideration the Budget Deficit (Income minus expenditure) is £113,140. If the Precept is not increased next year then the PC will receive a Precept income of @£101k so is potentially facing a 'loss' of £12k next year. This would need to be funded from reserves.

6. With WSCC cutting winter gritting/snow-ploughing in the village the Parish Council may need to fund these activities during severe weather events. Funds would need to come from reserves.

7. With WSCC cutting grass verge cutting and highways weed spraying there is also the possibility that the Parish Council will need to fund these services. Again, reserves would need to be used.

8. Councillors acknowledged that the use of Reserves is not sustainable long-term.

9. Councillors were minded to not increase the Precept but will need to wait until HDC issue their Council Tax Base figures before finalising the Precept. This would be known by the December PC meeting. The Clerk would circulate an updated budget in advance of this meeting.

10. The Parish Council is aware that it contributes significant funds to ACCT each year: Public Works Loan £6.2k, 50% contributions towards repair of play areas, all skatepark maintenance & insurance, litter & dog bin emptying on ACCT land, some ACCT grounds maintenance and had agreed to fund a Litter Warden to clear ACCT areas and the wider village but had to cut this particular cost in light of the significant budget deficit. Other aspects of the expenditure should be discussed separately with ACCT.

It was agreed that the draft budget be approved by the Finance Committee and recommended to the full PC for discussion at the December meeting and expected approval at the January meeting.

Meeting finished at 9.15pm

Signed.....

Date.....