



Ashington Parish Council

Finance Committee Meeting

Minutes of Ashington Parish Council Finance Committee Meeting held at 2pm on Wednesday 16th November 2016

Present: Councillors: T. Currell, T Kearney, J Stillwell

Parish Clerk: C Price & K Dare

Apologies: M Woolley

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 2017/18 which took into account likely cost increases for existing services, additional budget needs e.g. increased training budget so that the new Clerk could undergo training and a request from the Parish Council youth working party for an additional 3k to be added to the Youth Worker budget for training and fundraising.

The RFO explained that, in order to accommodate the additional expenditure it was necessary to cut back on other budgets: the planning consultant 2k budget and the 1k grants budget were removed. Councillors did not consider that the 2.5k hanging baskets budget should be removed as these are very popular amongst residents. The only other way to save any money would be to cut back the Council's annual allocation of funds to the Play Area, Election fees and street furniture maintenance reserves but it was agreed that these funds are needed to ensure long term care and replacement of capital equipment and election liabilities. There are no other possibilities to trim back expenditure.

The RFO had just received preliminary Tax Base figures from HDC that allow the Precept calculations to be done. There are two issues that will cause the Parish Council some problems:

1. The Council Tax Support Grant that the PC receives from HDC is reducing by 80% this coming year. In real terms the PC will receive £1300 less than HDC paid last year. All Parishes are affected equally.
2. The Tax Base figure for Ashington is reducing slightly this year. This means that the PC will receive less money per household next year.

The net effect of these two changes is that in order to receive the same amount of money from HDC next year that the PC received this year i.e. £94,377 there would

need to be a 1.6% increase in Precept i.e. the PC needs to increase by 1.6% just to stand still.

Councillors discussed the likely income streams for 2017/18 and identified that some may be 'at risk' in the future. All agreed that expenditure had been trimmed back as much as possible. All agreed that an increase in Precept was prudent as this would offset any losses in income or allow additional expenditure on important items such as increased Warden hours. It was agreed that a 5% increase would have minimal impact on residents but would give the PC sufficient additional funds to provide additional Warden resources, if needed. The Council does have some reserves but reliance on these for ongoing expenditure is not sustainable in the long term.

The RFO explained that a 5% increase would equate to an additional £4.10 per annum for a Band D property or £6.90 per annum for a Band G property.

The Parish Council has not increased the Precept for 6 years, with the last increase being 2010/11. Councillors felt that it was important to communicate the reasons for the increase to residents and what it means to them in real terms.

Meeting finished at 2:50pm

Signed.....

Date.....