Clerk’s report for Council Meeting to be held on Tuesday 6 December for the purposes of agreeing the Council budget for 2017/18

This report covers budgetary matters aims to give some further information to enable Councillors to make informed decisions what they would like to budget for in the coming financial year – it does not constitute recommendations but seeks to provide Councillors with the information they will need to reach a decision. If you require any other information or further detail before the meeting please let the Clerk know as soon as possible.

Points to consider:

1. The Parish Council Budget for the following financial year must be agreed by end of December (Cranham PC Standing Orders).
2. Stroud District Council will notify Parishes during December when the precept request has to be with SDC – likely to be mid January 2017. (it has not yet been received).
3. The Budget must include all anticipated sources of income and expenditure and indicate when reserves are to be used to cover planned expenditure. ALL planned expenditure must be included in the budget, even if the money used is to come from our reserves or other sources.
4. We currently have no earmarked reserves ie we can use what we have in the bank for any legitimate purpose. See page 57 onwards of Good Councillor guide for details of what you may spend money on as a local council

http://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/publications/801-good-councillors-guide/file

1. Councillors should consider whether it would be prudent to start to build reserves for specific purposes and/or whether it is appropriate to ringfence the funds so that they are kept for this purpose. If Councillors do decide to do this they should also consider establishing a rolling programme of planned maintenance works to predict likely future commitments eg the footpath to the houses in Church Close will need resurfaces at some point and trees in the playing fields will need regular (if not annual) maintenance. We do not currently have a planned maintenance or replacement programme. Some Playing Field equipment is coming to the end of its useful life and although it may be possible to raise the funds to replace it all in one go it may be more prudent to make provision for replacement on a yearly basis so that reserves are not completely used up and the Playing Field does not fall into disrepair. Other areas to consider are the notice boards, benches, fences, trees, office equipment.
2. There is currently no cap on increases to the precept claimed by Parish Councils. This cap currently only applies to principal authorities eg SDC. The Government has been consulting on whether to impose this cap on lower authorities and is expected to give an opinion in the next month or two. If the cap is imposed this will mean a limit of 5% increase on current precept. Ie if we wanted to increase our current budget by more than a little over £300 we would have to have a local referendum – the cost of this would be high and would greatly restrict any future work the Council wishes to carry out.
3. Councillors should consider whether the current level of reserves is adequate for potential unforeseen expenditure. We started this year with a little over £4000 in reserves but have spent almost £1000 on the Douglas Tonks issue and our current reserves could be completely wiped out by having to rebuild the Pound Wall (for example). As our precept is so small and we don’t have another significant source of income it may be wise to view the reserve in absolute terms and what that sum of money would cover rather than as a percentage of precept when deciding whether it is adequate.
4. Councillors should also consider whether there are projects within the community that it would like to support financially which legitimately comes within the powers of the Parish Council. http://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/publications/801-good-councillors-guide/file. Cranham PC already makes a couple of donations under S137 powers but could do more if councillors wish to do so. In January you will be considering how the Neighbourhood Watch is to work going forward – you may wish to consider whether it appropriate to make budgetary provision for this or for the village hall/school/tennis club etc
5. Defibrillator and VETS system. We have a defibrillator on the wall of the village hall, which needs to be inspected and maintained if it is to be of use to the village. We currently have no maintenance programme in place, preferring to pay the costs as they come up – we have no budget for this. So far we have had to replace the pads but we have not yet had to replace batteries or recommission it after use. The Heartbeat Trust (who monitor the inspections and maintenance needs) can provide maintenance cover for approx. £130 a year – this includes all replacement parts and re-commissioning after use (usually at least £150 plus new pads @ £70 for each outing the defibrillator has). The defibrillator has not yet been used but each time it is used it will cost us approx. £220 and if this were to happen more than once in a year it would severely deplete our reserves. Councillors should consider whether it would be prudent to subscribe to a maintenance programme of £130 pa or whether to budget for individual usage events and if so how many. One or other should be in the budget. It may also be prudent to budget for defibrillator replacement over a 5 year period.
6. The VETS system (Village Emergency Telephone System) was introduced alongside the new defibrillator and is necessary to get benefit from the defibrillator for most of Cranham. Its costs £100 a year to operate. It works by having a list of volunteers who agree to be phoned in an emergency and to give help to someone who is alone, by collecting the defibrillator, flagging down an ambulance to ensure it goes to the right address or similar. The ambulance service will only give details of the defibrillator to people calling who are within 500m of the defibrillator – this rules out many in Cranham and for them their only option for help is to use the VETS system which is not operated by the ambulance service but should be publicized within the village much more widely. We have not so far really utilize this system and could make it more beneficial for the community by relaunching it and making a small budgetary provision to provide some training for volunteers on emergency first response (what to do if someone has a stroke/heart attack/broken limb etc – not full first aid training but when to call for expert help and how to keep people calm and warm and or how to help those who have fallen and need assistance getting back up again). NB the VESTS system is not only for use with the defibrillator but may require a relaunch to make people aware of how it can work – and more training for volunteers so that they are aware of what they can and can’t do.
7. Clerks salary payments on expenditure sheet - total £2998.16 - made up as follows:
   1. £168.60 – tax for Jane paid to hmrc
   2. £19.50 – to PATA for pay admin
   3. £778.83 – jane net pay after tax
   4. £884.99 – repayment to jane of her tax paid to hmrc after douglas tonks went bust
   5. £78.87 – office sundries - expenses paid to Jane
   6. £69.77 – office sundries - expenses paid to Caroline
   7. £17.50 – to PATA for pay administration
   8. £980.10 to Caroline for gross pay for 110 hours
   9. in addition £980.10 – to Caroline for 110 hours – paid from Transparency fund for training and website development/transparency compliance etc
8. Clerk’s salary – Cranham Council currently pay the Clerk at Spinal Column Point 16 for 220 hours a year at a rate of £8.91 per hour. The payscales for Clerks were increased with effect from April 2016 and will increase again from April 2017. NB this is a nationally negotiated cost of living rise and not a merit rise. For 2017/18 SCP 16 is £9.054 per hour plus administration costs of approximately £15 per month. The Council may also like to consider whether the number of hours currently budgeted is adequate to carry out basic tasks currently required. See attached regarding time needed to cover basic Clerk duties.

**ANNEX 2 - PART-TIME CLERKS - HOURLY RATES April 2017**

Salary scales and hourly pay rates for **ALL** part-time clerks are calculated by **pro- rata** reference to the standard NJC working week for all local government staff of 37 hours. To calculate the hourly pay rate for part-time clerks paid between LC1 and LC4, divide the full- time annual salary by 52 weeks and then by 37 hours rounded to the 3rd decimal place.

**For part-time clerks in LC1 and part LC2, for example, the hourly rates, payable from 1 April 2017 are:**

**Scale LC1 and part LC2 (SCP - Spinal Column Point)**

SCP 15 £8.873

SCP 16 £9.054

SCP 17 £9.237

SCP 18 £9.392

SCP 19 £9.743

SCP 20 £10.099

SCP 21 £10.467

SCP 22 £10.739

SCP 23 £11.054

SCP 24 £11.415

SCP 25 £11.777

SCP 26 £12.161

SCP 27 £12.564

1. Grass Cutting – costs will increase in April by approximately 10% and an increased number of visits have been requested by the Playing Fields Committee. Councillors should consider whether they wish to budget for extra cuts. Alternative contractors will be invited to quote but there is no guarantee that they will be cheaper or better than current contractors therefore costs are not likely to be reduced for individual cuts.
2. Insurance premium is likely to rise as a result of increase in insurance premium tax and cost of living increase. Alternative quotes will be sought by Clerk but councillors should budget for an increase in insurance costs. Time to obtain alternative quotes is not insignificant and this needs to be born in mind when considering Clerk’s hours.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cranham Parish Council | Estimated Hours needed for Clerk duties | | | | Total Annual Hours |
|  | Weekly | Monthly | Bi-monthly | Annually |
| Full Council Meeting preparation in advance of meeting – agenda – reports, notices, website entry, bill payment, bank reconciliation, invitations to speakers/mtgs with chairman |  |  | 2/3 |  | 12/18 |
| Notices prepared and posted on boards |  | 1 |  |  | 12 |
| Planning meeting preparation in advance of meeting |  |  | 1 |  | 6 |
| Annual Parish Meeting – advance preparation |  |  |  | 2 | 2 |
| Annual Parish Council Meeting – advance preparation |  |  |  | 2 | 2 |
| Full Council Meeting Attendance – collation of papers/ opening hall and setting up room plus meeting/clearing up and locking up/returning key |  |  | 3 |  | 18 |
| Planning Meeting attendance – printing of papers, opening hall and attending meeting |  |  | 1.5 |  | 9 |
| Annual Parish Meeting – attendance |  |  |  | 2 | 2 |
| Annual Parish Council Meeting attendance |  |  |  | 1 | 1 |
| Full Council Meeting Actions – minutes/website/letters written/cheques sent and recorded |  |  | 3 |  | 18 |
| Planning Meeting Actions – lodging Council responses/filing papers |  |  | 0.5 |  | 3 |
| Annual Parish Meeting actions/minutes etc |  |  |  | 2 | 2 |
| Annual Parish Council Meeting actions/minutes etc |  |  |  | 2 | 2 |
| Checking/reading all email and post daily Monday to Friday | 5 x 15 mins = 1.25 | NB if weekends included 91 hours pa |  |  | 65 |
| Responding to enquiries from parishioners/councillors | 1 |  |  |  | 52 |
| Village Email |  |  | 6 |  | 36 |
| Council business /general administration |  |  |  | 6 | 6 |
| Defib checks and data entry |  | 1 |  |  | 12 |
| Preparation of Accounts and audit |  |  | 0.5 | 4 | 7 |
| Budget planning and precept calculation/return/queries |  |  |  | 5 | 5 |
| Internal audit meeting |  |  |  | 2 | 2 |
| Audit transparency requirements re public consultation/display of accounts/responding to audit queries |  |  |  | 2 | 2 |
| Compliance with statutory requirements – checking and reviewing standard documents and policies eg standing order/snow wardens details/risk assessment etc |  |  |  | 4 | 4 |
| Website updating |  | 1 |  |  | 12 |
| Keeping up to date with Councils obligations in order to advise councillors /answer questions Reading/Training/CPD/research/new suppliers etc |  |  |  | 15 | 15 |
| Demanding Collecting and banking allotment rents |  |  |  | 3 | 3 |
| Paid Holiday entitlement - in addition to weekends and bank holidays |  |  |  | 20 | 20 |
| **Total estimated** |  |  |  |  | **330 hours** |