**FYFIELD AND WEST OVERTON PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Finance Group meeting held on 13th November 2019 at 4 Glebe Meadows, Lockeridge, SN8 4DF at 2pm

**Present**: Cllr D Woolley (Finance Chairman), Cllr S Nichols & Cllr J Drew.

**Apologies:** Cllr G Emberlin & Cllr L Davies

**In attendance:** Mrs S Roberts (Clerk & RFO)

**Declarations of Interest** – None

**1. Minutes from last meeting:** were circulated, and approved.

**2. Matters arising from the minutes:**

GDPR – The Risk assessment has been updated to include GDPR – it was agreed Katie Fielding from Community First should be approached about further GDPR training. **Action Clerk**

Exemption certificate for Annual Audit – this has been submitted to PKF Littlejohn.

**3. Correspondence:**

* Precept request from Wiltshire Council.
* Budget requirements received from Assets Working Group.
* Tax Base information & Precept calculator received from Wiltshire Council.
* Funding request from the Traffic Representative & CEV.
* Knights Close – the new equipment has been added to the insurance policy. The equipment will need to be added to the Asset Register. **Action Clerk**
* Notification from SWAST – the defibrillators do not require insurance.

**4. Mid-Year review 2019/20**

The group examined the accounts. It was noted that the Lockeridge Traffic Group are shortly to be invoiced for the £1500 contribution towards the 20mph limit. **Action Clerk**

Cllr J Drew noted there could still be some surplus in the Lockeridge Traffic Group account, which could potentially be used towards the purchase of S.I.D.S. **Action J Drew**

It was noted the payments this financial year had been significantly higher than the receipts. Although this had been anticipated and reflected in the current budget additional expenditure has been incurred due to legal fees for the Land Registry and right of way dispute surrounding Lockeridge Dene and also the installation of a rabbit proof fence at the play area at Lower Fyfield.

Due to the timings of the purchase of the Knights Close play equipment and the imminent payment to SWAST for the defibrillators the Parish Council did have the potential for a cash-flow problem, this was due to the receipt of the Precept being split into two payments this year and the second half only being paid out in October. In order to rectify the situation the Clerk applied for a VAT refund for the Knights Close equipment. Consideration should be given next year when allocating projects to make sure they are evenly split throughout the year to avoid a repeated situation. It was agreed for the need to look into the potential for an overdraft facility. **Action Clerk**

1. **Reserves**

The group had discussed at the previous finance meeting the suggestion of holding 20 – 30% in reserves. Due to the large increase in expenditure for this year and the next this is currently not achievable without increasing the Precept for 2020/21 even further than the current proposal. Should the outcome of the current Freedom of Information request investigation be favourable we would be able to achieve a more significant percentage of the current proposed Precept figure for 2020/21.

1. **Expenditure requests for 2020/21**

Traffic – investigations are currently taking place into the joint purchase of mobile S.I.D.S. Any traffic requests to CATG currently require a 25% contribution from the PC and we currently have several applications in progress. £2,500 was considered to be an appropriate amount to cover for all eventualities.

Defibrillators – although these are likely to be installed in the current financial year it was noted there is a need for annual training. £200 has been allocated for this purpose.

The Lockeridge Youth Club has received significant funding from the Local Youth Network, the Parish Council and Tesco this year. It was agreed to carry over the unspent proportion of their funding and the Parish Council would pay for the hire of the hall for 2020/21.

Assets – the play area at Lower Fyfield is in need of several repairs and all the play areas will require new signage. It is proposed to replace the small litter bin at Knights Close with a larger one and relocate the current one to the Itchin.

Trees- following on from the successful Land Registry application for the Dene, the Council is now responsible for the trees on the Dene and also for the newly planted memorial copse at the Kennet Valley Hall.

Insurance – due to the addition of the new play equipment at Knights Close the current premium has increased, this has been reflected in the budget.

Training – although Councillor training has taken place this year it was felt that following a particularly challenging year more specific training in dealing with situations and the constant changes in legislation would be hugely beneficial. The Group proposed an allocation of £750 for this purpose.

Legal Fees – although there is no confirmed requirement for this the group felt based on eventualities during the current financial year it would be prudent to do so. The Group proposed an allocation of £1,000.

Donations – the Group would like an increase to £200 for other donations to help support local groups.

ICO & Freedom of Information – The Council is now required to register with the ICO annually. Should the Council be required to comply with a current Freedom of Information request it is anticipated the cost will be in excess of £700. An appropriate allowance for all eventualities and support would be £1,000.

VE Day – although this takes place in May 2020 it is anticipated some expenditure is likely to take place towards the end of the 2020/21 financial year and therefore suggest £500 be allocated.

Clerk Salary & hours – the clerk’s salary has not increased in increments the last 4 years. The Clerk has spoken with WALC who have confirmed that due to the lack of a proper signed contract and the wording of the Parish Council minutes at the time of her appointment she should have been eligible for the annual incremental increase and at present there is no cap to this. The Group looked at the NALC pay scale and propose the Clerk’s pay be increased for 2020/21 from level 14 to level 18. The clerk noted the nature of the work she is now expected to carry out has changed significantly from when she was first employed. There is now a need and an expectation for her to become involved with the Working Groups, dealing with solicitors, research, planning disputes and the website. She is now struggling to stay below the prescribed hours which has partially caused the delay in the website going live and the regular archiving not being carried out. It was proposed to increase her hours from 8 hours a week to 10.

The Clerk agreed to ask WALC for a model contract of Employment. **Action Clerk**

1. **Consider Draft Budget and propose Precept for 2019/20**

The group considered the draft budget, which included the expenditure requests above.

The group noted the additional expenditure required would have a significant impact on the Precept but felt our current Precept even with the increase this year has always been significantly lower than other Parishes of a similar size and the expenditure was justified. As more and more services are going to be passed down to the Parish Council level it is inevitable that the Precept will need to be increased year on year. Already this year we have seen a reduction in the number of grass cuts to our verges with some not being cut at all and many of our footpaths also becoming almost impassable during the summer months. The affect on the precept would be an increase from £36.87 to £47.55 on a Band D property, which is an increase of £10.68.

The Finance Group would like to propose to set the Precept for 2020/21 at £19,000.

1. **Financial Regulations**

The new model Financial Regulations are incredibly comprehensive. It was proposed the RFO and Finance Chairman review these in more detail and produce a new set of consolidated Financial Regulations for adoption at the January Parish Council meeting. **Action RFO & D Woolley**

**Meeting closed at 4pm**