

METHWOLD PARISH COUNCIL

Finance Meeting

Monday 22nd January 2024 at 10.30am in the Parish Office

M French, T Grassick, F Riches, T Thomas
D Younge joined the meeting later
Clerk/RFO

The meeting was not quorate; therefore, the meeting ran as a working group with recommendations being made to the full council for approval at a parish council meeting to be held on Monday 29th January 2024.

1. To receive and accept apologies for absence - S Liddle, J Rodwell, R Scott
2. Current Financial position as of 29th December 2023

Current Account	£ 30,834.85
Grants & Donations Account	£ 68,907.99
Premium Account	£ 29,958.59
Emergency Account	£25,386.71
Total	£154,748.73

The total amount includes interest £339.14 for the 3 months to December 2023

3. Bank Reconciliation for December 2023 – a copy was circulated to the parish council prior to the meeting. There are some outstanding payments which will be paid.
 4. Methwold Parish Council Budget for 2023/24 – a copy was circulated to the parish council prior to the meeting, due to the investigation last year by the external auditor there is an outstanding invoice for £2727.50 + £545.50 VAT which will be paid.
 5. Financial Reserve Policy – to be updated and circulated.
 6. Budget 2024/25 – draft will be circulated
- To MPC on 29th January for approval**
7. Budget & Precept requirements for 2024/25 – A spreadsheet showing the effect of different % increases to the Precept, the group suggested that a 5% increase would be required to meet the outgoings forecast for 2024/25.

This would mean for a Band D house the increase in contribution each month would go from 48p per month to 49p per month. Spreadsheet has been circulated to MPC.

To MPC on 29th January for approval

Items discussed for 2024/25 Precept

Cock Corner – Pavement for pedestrians – waiting for update from Highways – CIL or Parish Partnership could be used for this but as it is likely to be a considerable cost this will need to be planned and budgeted for over the next few years.

Cock Corner - repair RAF War Memorial – waiting for quote to repair then pursue the driver for costs.

The RAF memorial is listed on the asset register, and the insurance company have a copy, but the underwriters are deciding whether they agree it is covered.

The Clerk has asked the insurance company to confirm that the war memorial in the Cemetery is covered by the policy and to add it to the list if it is not.

The insurance for the parish council/Trust is due for renewal on February 7th, as the damage to the RAF war memorial is ongoing should the pc continue with the policy for one more year before going out for quotes?

To next meeting for discussion/approval to continue

Recreation Ground – Fence off children play area – group decided not to continue with this.

Recreation Ground – public toilets – group decided to install a temporary accessible toilet for 4 months during summer, quoted £75.00 per week serviced + VAT to see if the toilet is used.

Recreation Ground – replacement picnic benches – 3 standard 1 x disabled access plus base, suggestion to use the concrete pad already in place for the disabled access bench and replace the three other benches approximate cost £4,000 – CIL funds can be used?

Recreation Ground - Adult Exercise Equipment – quote required but expected to be approx. £10,000 the Section 106 funds can be used for this because it is an improvement to facilities on the recreation ground.

Section 106 funds were expected to be approx. £33,000 but the actual amount deposited in the bank is £43, 451.96, this has been moved to the Grants & Donations account.

Wild Flower Meadow – Two gates require attention, 1 gate has been removed and the other will need to be replaced when the churchyard wall is repaired.

Churchyard wall repairs, T Grassick updated the group – as agreed, the ivy has been removed, invoice to be paid, there are some places where the ivy cannot be removed because the wall will collapse.

A full survey and report is required.

Faculty will be required from the Diocese, gravestones will need to be removed and re-sited.

Wild Flower Meadow – Trees – gifted by Darbys – R Scott to arrange planting when the right time of year.

Wild Flower Meadow – replace old fence with hedges – the fence has several damaged posts, these will be supported by more posts until the time a hedge is installed. It may be possible to apply for a grant to purchase hedging, this will be investigated.

Various locations - Bus Stop Seating – Highways to respond to email sent by Chairman, it is thought there is not enough space to install seating at the bus stops.

Primary School - Flashing signs and 20mph – match fund MS £2k? PC to decide
Cllr Storey has offered a £2,000 donation from his fund towards flashing VAS signs outside the primary school, the parish council have been asked to match this amount, the £2,000 could be funded by CIL funds or the Parish Partnership Scheme if the parish council agreed to match fund. It is understood that a 20mph sign could be installed but unless there is a Traffic Restriction Order (cost approx. £7k) there is no legal order and therefore the speed limit is not enforceable.

Methwold Methwold Hythe & Brookville - Noticeboards - £4k – Group agreed these need to be purchased, Methwold Hythe and Brookville to be freestanding and big enough for 6 x A4 and Methwold to be 9 or 12 A4 size. All with the parish council name on them. It is hoped these will be purchased and installed before the year end. £4,000 is in the 2023/24 budget to purchase these.

MHCCT support - £12k was agreed by the parish council to support the Trust for the year 2023/24, to date £6,000 has been paid and the remaining amount was due to be approved in October 2023, this will need to be paid into the Trust account. Support will need to be ongoing.

New Finance Package for MPC including Cemetery - set up cost £1200 plus ongoing monthly subscription. The group discussed the benefits of having a software package for the accounts and Cemetery, two systems are being investigated Scribe and Realtis, details of the software has been sent to S Liddle. Last year this was investigated and Scribe thought to be the preferred software but it wasn't taken forward at the time, Scribe seems to be the system most popular with parish councils and will cover the Cemetery requirements as well.

This will be a Council Admin cost and for Scribe the cost is approx. £299 for set up of the accounts and Cemetery and 12 months subscription is £68 per month total in the first year of £1115.00 Realtis costs are £2850 for the first year and £604 ongoing

New Laptop for Clerk - £1000 estimated, S Liddle is looking into replacement costs. The current laptop was purchased in March 2018 and needs to be replaced. S Liddle to discuss requirements with the Clerk. This is a Council Admin cost and included in the budget.

It was suggested that EV charging points should be installed at St George's Hall, this will be taken to a Trust meeting.

There are some outstanding invoice which need to be paid as soon as possible.

To MPC on 29th January for approval

8. Update on bank signatories – ongoing
9. Any other business
10. To make recommendations to full council for approval at an Extraordinary Meeting which will be held on Monday 29th January 2024 at 7.30pm
 - To approve outstanding invoices
 - To approve payment of the annual insurance premium
 - To approve draft Budget for 2024/25
 - To approve Precept Requirement for 2024/25
11. To receive further reports/items for the next agenda
12. Date of next meeting

Meeting ended at 12.30pm

DRAFT