

Comberbach Parish Council

Parish Council Annual Accounts 2020/21 – Financial Report

The precept for the year was a slight increase of £317, or 1.4%, on the previous year to help towards the Council's cost inflation, but at a level which made no change to the household charge in residents' Council Tax.

However, income reduced by £480 following Council's decision to offer free advertising in the Newsletter to existing advertisers, to support their businesses during the pandemic.

Maintenance costs were similar to last year, despite the recreation area being closed for several months during the initial lockdown. Additionally, Council voted to extend the grounds maintenance contract for a further year during this period, though the contract will be put to tender in 2022.

Staff costs increased by 25% compared to 2019/20, due both to pay awards and the ex-gratia payment awarded for project work (12% of the increase), and due to differences in timings of repayment of PAYE to HMRC from one year to the next (13%). Our longstanding payroll provider closed its operation at the end of this financial year, and payroll will now be run by a new provider chosen at Council in January.

Newsletter costs continue at a relatively low level, particularly as no March 2021 edition was published, offsetting the impact of the reduced advertising income.

"Section 137" costs in the year were donations for the Christmas Tree at the Methodist Chapel, a commemorative wreath, and this year's Award trophy.

With no Comberbach Fete in 2020, project costs incurred were mainly for the Village Gateway signs and new furniture for the recreation area; both of these were paid for from 2019/20 funds but purchased this year and constituted the majority of the increase in Fixed Asset values from £51,000 last year to £64,000.

Council's cash balances reduced by £10,000 from last year end mainly due to these large purchases and stood at £42,676 at the end of March this year. This supports the Reserves requirement for future costs and projects of over £40,000 – much of which will be spent on the new Pump Track during 2021/22 at a purchase cost of just under £20,000.

The Council continues to live within its means and is normally able to put aside some funds for future costs and projects which will include the Pump Track, a planned Speed Indicator Device, Defibrillators as required, Noticeboard replacements and other major maintenance and project spends.

Stephen Penwill

Responsible Financial Office, Comberbach Parish Council