

Minutes of a Meeting of Comberbach Parish Council's Finance Committee held on Tuesday 7 January 2025

Present

Councillor J Johnston (in the Chair)

Councillors:

W Briggs

S Cameron

V McDermott

J Ryder

Stephen Penwill (RFO)

The Meeting started at 4.00pm.

1. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from the Parish Clerk.

2. To receive Members' Declarations of Interest

None

3. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance Committee held on 8 October 2024 be approved as a correct record.

4. Laptop for RFO

The Committee considered the purchase of a replacement laptop for the RFO. The laptop was 4 years old and was not charging effectively. A sum of £800 had been allocated in the current year's budget for a replacement.

RESOLVED: that the Council be recommended to approve a budget of £800 for a new laptop for the RFO.

5. Quarter 3 Budget Review

The Committee considered the Q3 budget review.

RESOLVED: that the budget review be noted.

5. Full year budget forecast

The RFO presented the full year budget forecast. The Committee accepted the forecast as presented.

Maintenance costs were forecast £2,000 higher than budget, while projects were underspent by a similar amount. The Committee agree to propose virements to budgets accordingly. The Committee noted that there was an expected surplus of £6,000 at year end which could be transferred to reserves.

RESOLVED: that the full year budget forecast be noted and budget virements recommended to Council..

6. Projects

The Committee considered the updated forward look of projects and noted the current projects for 2025/26 as below:

- Defib at Bowling Club –£1k allocated to 2025/26 for the Defib at the Bowling Club.
- VE Day – the 80th Anniversary of VE Day was 8th May 2025 and Members had agreed a similar commemorative event as had been held for D Day in 2024 with an afternoon of displays and exhibitions at the Memorial Hall along with a Brass Band performance and refreshments. The sum of £1k had been allocated.
- To bring forward the replacement infant slide from 26/27 to 25/26, at an increased cost of £10k (rather than £8k) to reflect inflation and a larger unit than that being replaced.
- To provide for improvements to seating in the Teen Shelter at a budget cost of £1k

The list of projects contained a forward look beyond 2027/28 and the Committee approved the updated list for recommendation to the Parish Council. A project to resurface the car park in 27/28 at a cost of £20k was to be included.

RESOLVED: That the Parish Council be recommended to approve the projects list to 2027/28 and beyond as outlined above.

7. Budget and precept 2025/26

The RFO presented a draft budget 25/26 based on the forecast for 24/25, applying the November 24 annual CPI inflation figure of 2.6% where appropriate to establish a budget for 25/26, or other amounts if required. It was agreed to increase the recreation area maintenance budget to £5k as discussed at the last FC meeting, and the General maintenance to £3k to allow for any contract price increases.

The RFO presented examples of a number of scenarios relating to the precept including keeping the precept the same as the previous year; keeping the Band D charge the same as the previous year; a 2.6% increase to the precept and a 2.6% increase to the Band D charge.

The Committee recognised the ongoing commitments of the Council particularly to the Recreation Area with ageing equipment together with the new focus on organising a small number of events to enhance community life including the D Day Beacon Lighting and Commemorative event and the Christmas Brass Band concert; both events had been provided free of charge and enjoyed by residents. It was agreed to recommend an increase in the precept of 2.6% to £28,129.

RESOLVED: that the Parish Council be recommended to increase the precept by 2.6% which is the sum of £28,129 and represents £62.96 for a Band D property which is an increase of £2.16 over 12 months.

8. Reserves

The RFO advised that there was currently a total of £28k in reserves and it was unlikely to be used for the current financial year. A further £6k is likely to be transferrable to reserves at the year end, recognizing the need to build funds in advance of expected major expenditure on recreation area equipment in the near future. The Committee noted that best practice required a sum be kept in reserves for 3 months’ running costs which for Comberbach Parish Council represented over £6k.

RESOLVED: that the reserves be noted.

9. Date of next meeting

The next meeting would take place on Tuesday 15th April 2025 at 4pm.

The Meeting closed at 5.05pm

Cllr J Johnston (in the Chair)