



CLERK'S REPORT
Finance Committee Meeting
7th April 2022

BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED

Number	Item	Time
1.	Apologies for absence & housekeeping Cllr. Bushell has sent his advanced apologies.	1 min
2.	Disclosure of interests None have been received in advance.	2 mins
3.	Minutes The minutes of the last formal Committee meeting (03.11.2021, end of Qtr. 3) were circulated to Members via email and approved for publication to support the preparation of the draft budget and Precept by full Council in January 2022.	1 min
4.	Public participation No requests by members of the public have been received in advance.	10 mins
5.	Order for Payments – Year End <i>Please refer to the website here</i> Financial Report for March 2022. Includes income and expenditure since the last full Council meeting (09.03.2022) up to 31.03.2022.	2 mins
6.	Interim Internal Audit Report <i>Please refer to the website here to view the report.</i> The Clerk met with the new Internal Auditor, Mr Mike Platten, on 9th March. The Internal Audit has highlighted the following areas for note/improvement: -	5 mins

- All future contracts for expenditure above £25,000 must be advertised on the Contracts Finder website in accordance with the requirements within Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
- The Council should apply for a debit card on the Council's bank account.
- The Clerk should attend RBS accounting system training to make better use of the available system.
- The Council must state that it is the sole trustee of the Plaistow Playing Field Charity (charity 305404) on its Annual Return.

The full and final Internal Audit for the 2021/22 accounts is scheduled for 26th April.

7. **Verification of bank reconciliations for Qtr. 3 (Oct – Dec 2021) and Qtr. 4 (Jan -March 2022)** 5 mins

Members have been provided with the following documents via the Council's secured Dropbox account:

Qtr. 3

Bank Statements and corresponding bank reconciliations for October – December 2021

Qtr. 4

Bank Statements and corresponding bank reconciliations for January – March 2022

Cash book reports for both the current and deposit accounts to 31st March 2022.

The meeting will appoint a Member who is not a bank signatory to sign these documents, via Secured Signing.

8. **To consider Tranche 1 [grant applications](#) for 2022/23 (to be paid to groups no later than 30th April)** 20 mins

As of 1st April 2022, the Parish had 1,619 registered electors.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities has issued the 2022/23 figure by which to calculate the maximum lawful expenditure the

Parish Council can incur on any matter for which it does not have a power in law.

This figure is £8.82 per elector.

Therefore, the maximum budget Plaistow and Ifold Parish Council can assign in 2022/23, for expenditure which falls outside of its lawful powers and duties, is: £14,279.58; (1,619 electors multiplied by £8.82 per elector). (In 2021/22 it was £13,792.40).

s.137 Local Government Act 1972 authorises Councils to spend a prescribed amount annually on discretionary matters, authorised by resolution, where it does not have a specific legal power, or duty to incur expenditure. It is the 'power of last resort'. The power was amended by s.36 Local Government & Housing Act 1989, which states the expenditure must be for the direct benefit of their community and proportionate to the benefit that it will provide. If considered disproportionate, the Council's auditor, or local electors can challenge the expenditure. A Council must account separately for its annual s.137 expenditure; the rights of inspection under s.25 Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 apply to this separate account. It cannot be used to benefit an individual; to avoid any prohibited or restricted purpose; or, conversely, a purpose already legislated for.

Many of the grant applications received by the Parish Council are lawfully paid via s.137(4)(a) Local Government Act 1972.

The 2022/23 annual budget takes into consideration the maximum amount each group has applied for. However, it is for Members to consider and resolve upon the final grant award. The budget also factors in the grant awards made in 2021/22 to those organisations who, as yet, have not applied. For example, the Ifold Scouting group and IFRA. These groups may apply later in the year. All groups receive an email from the Clerk reminding them to apply in good time.

Grants awarded will be paid no later than 30th April 2022.

Members have received all grant application forms via the Council's secure Dropbox account. A summary of the grant applications and the amounts requested is published on the Parish Council's website [here](#).

The grant webpage will be updated following the meeting:
<https://plaistowandifold.org.uk/grants> and
<https://plaistowandifold.org.uk/grants-expenditure>

9. **To consider the 2021/22 Budget Forecast Comparison spreadsheet at Quarter 4 / Year End** 10 mins

The spreadsheet shows the agreed budget for 2021/22 (column H) and the Year End actual expenditure per budget heading (column M). This is labeled 'draft' as it is subject to minimal alteration as the accounts are closed. Column J shows the 'posted' budget, as at 31.03.2022 (excluding any prepayments/accruals; and column K notes the prepayments/accruals, which are reflected in the final figure (column M). Column O provides guidance in relation to the prepayments/accruals.

For example, the Clerk's Salary includes a £1,650 accrual due to the 1.75% pay rise applicable for the period of 1st April 2021 – 31st March 22, which was agreed and announced by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) on 28th February 2022.

The Parish Council employs its staff on the National Association of Local Council's (NALC) standard contract. At para 3.1 it states: -

The National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service of the National Joint Council ("the NJC") for Local Government Services ("the Green Book") applies to your employment save as amended by this contract.

The full Council will formally consider and ratify this pay increase at its meeting on 11th April.

10. **Agreed Budget for 2022/23** 15 mins

The Finance Committee recommended a draft budget to the full Council on 12th January 2022 ([here](#)). Upon the basis of that draft budget, the full Council resolved to increase its Precept requirement to £96,000 in 2022/23.

The Precept amount was subsequently confirmed by CDC and the first installment will be paid mid-April.

The Finance Committee must now recommend to full Council (on 11th April) the final Agreed Budget.

Please refer to the spreadsheet called 'Copy of Draft Budget_Precept_2022-23 Update_31.03.2022', which can be found [here](#).

Column C is an *aide memoir* of the approved 2021/22 budget for comparison purposes only. Column H pulls over the final 2021/22 figures, as outlined in column M of the 2021/22 Budget Forecast Comparison spreadsheet at Quarter 4 / Year End (see agenda item 9 above). Column J provides the draft annual budget which Members must consider and, subject to any amendments made in the meeting, resolve to recommend to the full Council.

Members may find it helpful to remind themselves of the Clerk's Report to Council in relation to the January draft budget, which can be found [here](#).

During the meeting, the Financial Committee must bear the following in mind:

- Known costs, e.g., the 2022/23 Insurance premium and subscriptions for NALC/WSALC/SLCC, have been reflected in the budget. All other 'regular administrative figures' have been uplifted by small % to reflect the general increase in costs across the board.
- The Finance Committee is not responsible for making decisions on items such as the Clerk's Salary etc. It is for the respective Steering Groups and/or Committees to make recommendations to the full Council and for the full Council to decide. The responsibility of the Finance Committee, when looking at the budget, is to ensure that the Council has a realistic budget 'band width' to make decisions over the course of 2022/23.
- The budget reflects projects which are either: (a) in progress; (b) have already been agreed by the Council, although are yet to be formally started; and (c) projects which have been guided by public consultation.
- Public consultation is the key tool used to provide a mandate to spend public money. The Council has undertaken recent and comprehensive public consultation and therefore has good authority to undertake all desired projects.

- On 11th April, full Council will consider the Clerk's salary. In accordance with the Clerk's contract of employment, the Parish Council is contractually obligated to increase the Clerk's salary by one salary point, up to a maximum of four points for successfully completing CiLCA. The budget figure (column J:9) takes into consideration the recommended amount put to the full Council by the HR Committee, who have the responsibility to ensure the Clerk is on the current /correct pay scale
- The budget called 'Stationary & Printing' includes the monthly Secured Signing subscription, printer ink/paper and any maintenance required on the Parish Council laptop – all matters relating to the management of the Parish Council's office.
- The budget called 'Web Site Maintenance, Internet and Email Management' includes all the costs associated with the Council's website and email hosting, planning tracker (which is embedded into the website), the cost to upgrade to a .gov.uk web/email domain name (£60 per annum for a minimum contract of 2 years); upgrade to the dropbox account (£95.88).
- Grants and Donations: - As stated above, the budget takes into consideration the maximum amount each group has applied for. However, it is for Members to consider and resolve upon the final grant award. The budget also factors in the grant awards made in 2021/22 to those organisations who, as yet, have not applied. For example, the Ifold Scouting group and IFRA. These groups may apply later in the year.
- Winterton Hall Legal Assessment: - On 11.04.2022, the full Council will consider the initial costs set out by Roger Taylor, Solicitor at Wellers Hedleys to untangle the landownership at the Winterton Hall and the Trust Deed. You will recall that the Winterton Hall Management Committee has asked the Parish Council to consider taking over the management responsibilities for the hall.
- Grass cutting: - The 2021/22 figure includes the March 2021 accrual for 2020/21, which was not correctly accrued / taken into budgetary consideration. End of 2020/21 was the first year the Parish Council used accruals/prepayments and errors occurred. The budget for 2022/23 is known due to Sussex Land Services three-year tender costs and includes the March 2023 accrual.

- RoSPA Play Area Inspection: - The budget includes the requirement to undertake a post installation assessment of any new playpark in Ifold, if this comes to fruition in 2022/23.
- Winterton Hall - Repairs & Maintenance: - The budget takes into consideration a request from the Management Committee for financial support towards the roof repairs (quoted at £12,500) and plumbing works required further to the legionella assessment.
- Winterton Hall - Legionella Training & Water Sampling: - This is a new budget heading for 2022/23, further to the legionella risk assessment, for annual water samples at the Winterton Hall and pavilion and any associated works that arise.
- Pavilion Cost & Maintenance: - This budget takes into consideration the recommended electrical works required at the pavilion following the Electrical Installation Condition Report & PAT Testing Report. This matter is considered under agenda item 12 below. The Pavilion's electrics will 'host' several major community events in 2022/23 (Maypole Fete / Queen's Platinum Jubilee / School summer fair).
- Ifold Playpark (former Unnamed Project): - this is a matter which has been agreed by the Council and will be progressed / completed in 2022/23. Some expenditure was anticipated in 2021/22, e.g., the lease preparation, however this did not materialize. Therefore, the £1,500 budget in 2021/22 has been pulled across and the full £20,000 proposed budget has been set against this item for 2022/23. The Council can use its CIL money - £4,591.00 – against this project. Therefore column J:127 shows that the CIL stands at £0.00 as it has been included in the £20,000 budget. The Council agreed to take the full £50,000 loan against the Plaistow Playpark so that the budgeted expenditure from the 2021/22 Precept (£15,000) was reduced to £5,000. The £10,000 'saving' was put towards the Ifold playpark area. There was also a £3,000 unnamed project budget in 2021/22 which has also been allocated to the Kelsey Hall playpark. Therefore, the actual 'additional' hitherto unbudgeted expenditure for this project is £2,409. Ifold Estates *may* agree to pay for the fencing and culvert work required on their land (the verge) when a new access way is created therefore reducing the budget requirement.

- Bus Stop Refurbishment / Maintenance: - This £6,000 budget is made up of the two New Homes Bonus grant awards from 2020/21 and 2021/22 which can only be spent on this project. The two new bus shelters in Plaistow and The Drive, Ifold will be built by West Sussex County Council's Communities & Public Protection Directorate Volunteer Scheme. They were scheduled to be built in 2020, however the pandemic frustrated these plans. Unfortunately, the timescale for the build remains fluid for the time being. They were due to begin March 2022, however this specialist team of trained volunteers have again been redeployed to support the Afghan and Ukrainian refugee schemes.
- Ifold Village Entrance Landscaping: - Phase 2 of this project begins at the end of April 2022.
- Queens Platinum Celebrations inc. "Tree ThroughTime": - The PC set a budget of £3,000 and an anonymous donor gave a further £2,000. Total expenditure to date (2021/22) stands at £1,794.00; therefore, the remaining budget has been pulled across to 2022/23: £3,200.00
- Neighbourhood Plan Contingency: - This budget has been allocated to pay any professional fees required to draft a response to CDC's growth scenario consultation for this Parish as demonstrated in the below table. Further to a meeting of the Northern Parish's on 17th March, each Parish will respond to CDC accordingly. The full Council will consider this matter at its meeting on 11th April.

Table 2 Growth scenarios to be tested for the northern part of Chichester Plan area

	Kirdford	Loxwood	Plaistow and Ifold	Wisborough Green	Total
No further permissions ¹	56	95	8	26	185
Limited Growth ²	70	115	15	40	250

¹ Typically the scenarios set out in this table are for new sites which do not have permission as at 1 April 2021. However, this scenario does include those permissions for completeness sake to demonstrate that there is expected to be a certain level of development *whatever* follows in the final Plan.

² Typically the scenarios set out in this Table are for new sites which do not have permission as at 1 April 2021. However, this scenario was prepared in November 2020. It is included here (and in future work) for completeness sake.

Significant Growth 1	70	200	100	40	410
Significant Growth 2	110	290	115	80	595
Full development	242	322	795	118	1,477

- The budget does not consider any *ad hoc* grants the Parish Council may receive in 2022/23 such as the New Homes Bonus (although this scheme is coming to an end); or any CIL payments.
- The budget projects a net overspend, as at 31.03.2023, of (£14,403.78).
- Ringfenced reserves - Crouchlands Development Planning Consultancy: -The Council resolved to appoint experts to support its response to the anticipated planning applications on 28th April 2021. The budgeted amount, based on the fee proposals put forward by these experts, is £15,000. In light of the water neutrality issue, Members may wish to re-consider this reserve. The six-month moratorium on overturning a resolution has passed.
- Ifold Village Entrance Landscaping: - A modest reserve has been set aside to carry over to 2023/24 budget to allow for expert support to maintain the area. Either to continue to support volunteers, or step in if volunteer enthusiasm has ceased. This will prevent the area reverting to brambles and effectively wasting the money spent on the project rejuvenating the area.
- The budget projects a reserve position, as at 31.03.2023, of £17,873.96, without taking into consideration the outstanding loan amount. Including the loan, this increases to £53,470.39.

11. **Employer [Pension Discretions Policy](#)**

10 mins

The Parish Council must adopt a Pensions Discretion Policy confirming how it will exercise the compulsory discretions and any of the optional discretions allowed under the Local Government Pension Scheme.

On 28th March, Members received (via email) the following documents:

- Pension Discretions Policy Template

- Notes from Cllr. Taylor's attendance at a pensions workshop
- The following website links have been issued by Hampshire Pension Services as helpful:
 - <https://www.hants.gov.uk/hampshire-services/pensions/local-government/employers/policy-service-standards/discretions>
 - <https://lgpslibrary.org/assets/gas/ew/DISCPv1.10c.pdf>

The Clerk is unable to advise on this matter as it represents a conflict of interest as it concerns their own pension. However, advising on pensions is a regulated activity and the Clerk is not qualified to provide this specialist advice. If Members feel unable to recommend to the full Council the amended Pension Discretions Policy based on the information available, they can resolve to instruct the services of a financial advisor.

12. Electrical work for the cricket pavilion

5 mins

On 15th February, electrician Kevin Webber undertook PAT testing of the appliances within the Pavilion. Mr. Webber is contracted to support the Winterton Hall's electrics and so was instructed by the Clerk to assess the pavilion at the same time as undertaking electrical works at the hall. Three (3) extension cables and the vacuum cleaner failed the PAT test. It is recommended that one (1) extension cable is replaced.

On 11th March, Mr. Webber carried out an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) on the Cricket Pavilion. The Pavilion received a certificate with an Unsatisfactory Result.

The following matters were highlighted:

- **The Consumer Unit**
The Fuse board has various holes in its structure that are too big for safety reasons. Because it has been fixed to a wooden backing board no fire sealant is evident. Recommendation is to Renew the board for a Modern Consumer with all the relevant Fire-Retardant materials.

Mr. Webber has provided two options to enable a satisfactory result in relation to the consumer unit:

1. replace and renew the board with a new RCBO Protected circuits.
Parts and Labour £340.00

2. Fire seal the existing Consumer Unit. Parts and Labour £100
- Colour Identification sleeving missing from conductors in the switches and ceiling roses. Recommendation. Re-sleeve the conductors.
 - Cable Termination in loft ie Ceiling Rose with no cover. Recommendation. Renew Light and Place a switch in the loft or by Loft hatch with neon to indicate on or off.

In relation to the above two matters, the estimate is as follows:

Colour Identification. Sleeving missing from conductors. Re-sleeve the conductors.

Cable Termination in loft i.e., Ceiling Rose with no cover. Renew Light and place a switch in the loft or by Loft hatch with neon to indicate on or off.

Parts and Labour £ 150

- Safety Alarm - The Alarm needs attention either removed or renewed as it actuates when a power failure happens. Also poor connection to alarm Siren is evident.
- Further Recommendation is to have smoke Alarms fitted with an outside Neon as the building is made of wood and vulnerable to Fire. The quote for this work is: £370.00, including parts and labour

To supply and fit two multi sensor mains /battery backup Smoke alarms within the Cricket Pavilion. One in the store room and the other in main room, including providing a Strobe light that would be fitted on the side of the Pavilion to show a visual warning that the alarms are actuating.

The pavilion's electrics need to support the Maypole Fete (02.05.2022), Queen's Platinum Jubilee (03 & 05.06.2022) and other community use of the pavilion, including the School's summer fair.

Mr. Webber can undertake the work prior to these events.

13. **Meeting Dates**

1 min

Recommendation: - The end of Qrt.1 meeting will take place on 6th July 2022 at Kelsey Hall, Ifold, 19:30