

<b>Committee, Group or Sub Group</b>	
FINANCE & STRATEGY GROUP	
<b>Meeting Date &amp; Venue</b>	
6.30pm Wednesday 9 <sup>th</sup> October 2019, Parish Office, Staplehurst Village Centre	
<b>Report Author</b>	
Deborah Jenkins, Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer	
<b>Report</b>	
<p><b>Present:</b> Parish Councillors Paddy Riordan (PR), Colin Bowden (CB), Joan Buller (JB), John Perry (JP). Deputy Clerk &amp; Finance Officer Deborah Jenkins (DJ), Parish Clerk Mick Westwood (MW).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Apologies:</b> Cllr Caz Walsh (CW). Not present: Cllrs Sue Forward (SF) and Sam Lain-Rose (SL-R).</li> <li><b>Declarations:</b> There were no declarations</li> <li><b>Minutes of last meeting</b> (09/07/2019): it was NOTED that they had previously been issued to Full Council and published on the PC website.</li> <li><b>Draft Budget 2020-2021:</b> The Deputy Clerk had prepared a first draft of the budget for discussion. It was noted that since 2017-2018 the reserves had been reduced considerably. It was acknowledged that this could not continue and that the reserves should be built up. The Deputy Clerk was requested to speak with the internal auditor Tim Kendrick or KALC's auditor, David Bucket, for advice on the suggested levels of reserve to be held. CB asked DJ/MW to provide a table with the precept increase in terms of percentage year on year since 2010-2011 to be sent to members of the group. It was suggested that some alternative precept figures from that stated on the current draft budget be input to show the differences in the cost to a Band D property. The draft budget figures will be reviewed by both group members and staff to see where possible savings can be made. MW suggested an article be published in the winter Village Update informing residents that the budget for 2020/21 is being drafted and asking for their views and priorities for services in the village.</li> </ol> <p><u>ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Youth Leader Project</b> – MW had been advised by Paul Kelly that the signed Maintenance Agreement, with one small adjustment, would be returned to SPC this month. The formal agreement to cover SPC's financial support of the youth leader role can then be pursued.</li> <li><b>Jubilee Playing Field</b> – In the absence of SL-R there was nothing to report.</li> </ol> <p><u>OTHER BUSINESS</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Internal Auditors Report</b> – The report was NOTED by members. MW mentioned that the report recommended that data back-ups are kept off site. Members agreed that the current situation, with back-ups being kept in the fire-proof safe, was satisfactory. JB was unsure whether her anti-virus and security software on her home computer, used for SPC electronic banking, was up to date. She would look into this. PR suggested that he would publicise the exemplary auditors' report in his next Chairman's Facebook update.</li> <li><b>Review of SPC's Financial Regulations</b> – A schedule of amendments based on the new NALC model had been circulated. Councillors agreed to review the guidance and advise the parish office of any amendments. SPC's current Financial Regulations would be updated for approval by Full Council.</li> </ol>	

9. **Consultation: Independent Review into Local Government Audit** – the Group were in agreement that MW should respond to the consultation with a general comment about ensuring requirements were proportional to the size of local councils as he had suggested.
10. **Recommendations from Employment Group** – PR reported that Employment Group is to recommend to Full Council that the Clerk and Deputy Clerk are paid their accrued overtime hours as in Scenario 1 of the schedule produced and that the Deputy Clerk and Admin Support Officers hours are increased from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019. This was endorsed by group members.
11. **Recommendations from Community Enhancement Group** – PR was confident that no expenditure would be incurred by the Parish Council for the further improvements to The Parade planters. It was noted that works would proceed as far as covered by donations from local businesses.
12. **Next Quarter Contract Reviews & Payments to be made** - A schedule of forthcoming contracts and subscriptions for renewal had been circulated to all Group members. It was agreed to recommend to Full Council the renewal actions set out in Appendix A with the exception of Paxman Printing, as the future of the Update and Annual Report is to be discussed at FC on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and the quarterly sum paid to the Youth Worker which would be discussed on receipt of the Youth Club finances following their AGM on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019 . DJ was requested to invite Paxman Services (UK) Ltd to quote for the Bell Lane Toilet annual contracts. MW confirmed that Staplehurst Village Centre were in the process of drawing up a new lease for the parish offices.
13. **Date of Next Meeting** – TBA.