

NORTH CRAWLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Notes on Budget Meeting held on Tuesday 15 November 2023 in the Village Hall

Present: Councillors Steve Garner (in the Chair), Jim Armstrong, Derek Harpur, Niels Kearney, Terry Smith and Jan Weatherley; Sheila Bushnell (Clerk and RFO)

The meeting had been called to discuss the budget for 2024/2025

The Clerk had previously circulated a spreadsheet detailing the current financial position and the outturn for the end of the financial year on 31 March 2024.

Following consideration of this spreadsheet, it was decided that some of the headings would remain at the same level for the next financial year, except for the following:

EXPENDITURE:

- **Landscape contract:** A 5% increase to the contracted amount of £8,625 was added in case there was a request for a price increase due to the current economic climate (£9,056).
- **Emptying Dog Bins contract and Village Warden Equipment:** The amount for the current financial year would be £1,164 and would be payable in January 2024. A price increase of 10% was added for the next year to account for inflation (£1,280).
- **General Maintenance:** It was decided to make a commitment in the current year to repair the pavement damage in Church Walk (£1,500).
- **Maintenance of Trees:** It was decided to make a commitment in the current year in case the tree on the playing field needed to be felled. A particular tree had already been identified as being at risk.
- **Playground equipment and maintenance:** It was agreed that the budget would be:

Children's Play Area (Kompan)	£411.81 (update price already confirmed)
Adventure Play Area (Sovereign)	£377.89 (current price +5%)
ROSPA Annual Statutory Inspection	£164.00
General Maintenance	£1,000
- **Traffic Control Equipment:** £4,200 was included in the budget for the purchase of solar panels for the SIDs. It was suggested that the Chair do some research into the lifespan of this type of solar panels.
- **Defibrillator:** An amount had been included in the current year for the purchase of a combined defibrillator and bleed kit cabinet. However, the Clerk has discovered from the Community Heartbeat Trust that bleed kits should never be in a locked cabinet as they would be needed to be used within minutes of a serious bleed incident. They needed to be in locations where they could be employed immediately where a serious incident was more likely to happen, e.g. large venues and work places where incidents or accidents might occur. It was therefore decided not to purchase a bleed kit but to replace the defibrillator cabinet in the current year as it was becoming difficult to open easily (£700). £200 was included in the budget for the next year in case a new battery for the defibrillator was required.
- **Water:** It was noted that these charges had increased in the current year and that there would be an overspend. Next year's budget was therefore increased to £54 to match the current level of spending.
- **Cemetery Management software (Scribe):** An invoice was due in January 2024 for the software renewal commencing on 1.2.2024. This was currently £23 per month (£276.00 per annum) and this had been included as a commitment in the current year. It was agreed that next year's budget would be £276 plus 5% for inflation (£290).

- **Clerk's and Village Warden's salaries:** Details of the national pay award applicable from 1 April 2023 were received at the beginning of November and would be backdated to April. The commitment to 31.3.24 therefore included this increase and back pay. A 4% uplift for inflation was included in the budget for next year (£9,440).
- **Payroll Software:** The current monthly charge for this was £8. £96 had therefore been included in the budget for next year. This assumed that there would be no increase from Sage next year. Sage tended to do increases every other year and the last increase was in 2023.
- **Finance Software (Scribe):** Following the change from Rialtas software to Scribe on 1.4.23, this heading had overspent in the current year as there was a one-off set up fee of £247 for Scribe plus the annual fee of £348. The figure in next year's budget would be the annual fee of £348 plus 5% as an estimate for inflation (£365).
- **Website maintenance and email addresses:** A commitment of £675 had been included as a commitment in the current year for invoices which were expected in February/March 2024 (£50 for 10 x email addresses; £500 for website annual support and £125 for 2-year renewal of domain name registration to 2025). An amount of £550 was included in next year's budget for email addresses and website support.
- **Insurance:** The insurance premium was under budget for the current year due to a change in insurers which had reduced the premium. The total insurance premium was £889.98 but was reduced by the contribution from the Cricket Club for the insurance of the cricket practise nets. An amount of £1,000 was included in next year's budget, allowing for inflation.
- **Bank Account and Barclaycard service charge:** This amount would be increased to £114 to reflect actual costs.
- **Stationery:** This amount in the budget was decreased from £100 to £75.
- **Postage:** The amount in the budget was decreased from £10 to £5.
- **Neighbourhood Plan:** The amount in the budget for next year was agreed at £500. This was in anticipation of meeting costs, etc. considering the implementation of the Plan.
- **IT Equipment:** An amount of £500 had been included in the budget for the current year plus there was an amount of £1,000 in Ear Marked Reserves for a replacement laptop. The current laptop would require a new battery soon and the support subscription with Dell ended in April 2025. The Clerk therefore suggested that the laptop should be replaced in the early part of the next financial year. The Clerk installed the current Dell laptop herself but it was agreed that a safer option would be to set the new laptop up professionally as it would involve the transfer of large amounts of data. The following budget amount for next year was agreed:

Purchase of laptop	£1,000 (from ear marked reserve)
Set up of laptop	£500
Microsoft 365 subscription	£125
Contingency	£500

 Note: The McAfee anti-virus subscription was valid until May 2025

INCOME:

- **Cemetery fees:** A budgeted amount of £5,000 was agreed, £1,000 less than the amount for the current year.
- **Interest from Bank Accounts:** Bearing in mind the current situation with interest rates, it was very difficult to estimate what was going to happen in the next year. So far £472 had been received in the current year which was £402 higher than budgeted. A budgeted income of £600 was agreed for the next year

SMB/30.11.2023