

Chiseldon Parish Council



FINANCE COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT 2019 - 20

The responsibility of the Finance Committee is to formulate and manage the budgets of the Parish Council and its subcommittees. The Council's expenditure is reviewed on a monthly basis by either the Finance sub-committee or the full Parish Council. Monthly supervision of the accounts continues to ensure effective management of the council's finances and offers the opportunity to councillors to scrutinise the payments being made.

The Finance Committee and its business was amalgamated into Full Council in May 2019 due to a lack of councillors. It is hoped that in the coming months, the sub-committee can be restarted with its own Chairman.

Our accounts are subjected to an internal audit by a qualified accountant, Sansum and Company, twice per year and by the external auditors, PKF Littlejohn at the end of the financial year which is a legal requirement.

Finance Strategy

The Parish finances remain in good health and our spending has come in below budget. Any funds remaining from the 2019-2020 year of account will be carried over into reserves or allocated to new/longer term projects with the agreement of the Finance Committee.

The primary income for the Parish Council is provided by our precept. The Finance Committee sets the budget and amount of precept which is subsequently agreed by the Full Council. This amount is then requested from Swindon Borough Council who then divide the amount by the number of residences in the Parish and collect via the council tax.

In previous years, the council has had to increase precept significantly due to taking on several responsibilities (such as litter picking, grass cutting and general parish maintenance) that were previously managed by Swindon Borough Council and a change in the parish boundary. We maintained a 2.9% increase last year, but due to increasing reserves have been able to agree a budget with a 0% increase with any shortfall in funding, budgeted to be small, being covered from reserves. The precept this year has been set at £139,000; the same as in 2019-20.

The council has delivered several projects in the previous year, primarily concerned with traffic and parking. Major projects completed were the Norris Close parking layby and a Vehicle Activated Sign on the B4005 Hodson Road. The council will evaluate the success of these projects and decide whether further projects are viable.

The council also continues to support local charities and organisations through its grants and donations programme and by funding the weekly youth activities via the BIOS project.

The Recreation Hall off Norris Close remains a concern to the council as the building nears its end of life. Significant problems with fire doors were noted this year and a budget has been allocated to repairing those. The roof is also beginning to fail and so we have put a further £10,000 into reserves to cover a future replacement of this building. The reserve allocated to this project now stands at £55,000 and we must begin to prepare a plan to find a suitable location and design for the replacement of this community asset. The reserve is significantly under the amount needed to replace the building, so a grants and donations committee will need to be created to find further funding for this project.

We will be looking to apply for grants and funding in the 2020/21 municipal year to provide an outside gym/play area on the recreation fields as this has been requested a number of times over the past five years. If successful, this should provide a valuable amenity to the residents of the parish.

The council has also taken on a handyman to help reduce the costs around outsourcing smaller maintenance tasks and an administration officer was recruited to assist the clerk. This position went live as the municipal year began.

During the year we have also worked with our accountants to better report performance against budget and to continue to empower committees to manage and use their allocated funds more effectively.

Banking

The Parish Council holds a current account and a savings account with our bankers, Santander.

Accounts

The accounts will be audited internally in the next month by our internal auditors, Sansum and Co Ltd and then by External Auditors, PKF Littlejohn in order to comply with relevant legislation.

<<< Insert summary accounts here >>>

Further information on the finances of the Parish can be obtained from the Parish Clerk or the Finance committee.

I wish to extend my thanks to all finance committee members past and present for their work during the year.

Matthew Harris
Chairman of Council
Chiseldon Parish Council.