

Abbots Langley Parish Council

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16th November 2020.

To Members of the Finance & Administration Committee

Councillors Sara Bedford, Liz Burns (Chairman), Ruth Clark, Fran Deschampsneufs, Jane Lay, Owen Roe & John Swallow.

The next meeting of the Finance & Administration Committee will be held virtually ^[1] on Monday 23rd November 2020 at 6:00 pm when your presence is summoned for the purpose of transacting the business outlined below.

The meeting will be held on the Zoom platform. Login details are available from the Clerk to the Council.

The press and public are welcome to attend the meeting.

Tim Perkins
Clerk to the Council

^[1] *Permitting legislation - The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.*

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**
To receive and accept apologies for absence.
2. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda.
3. **Public Participation**
To note if any members of the public have requested to speak at this meeting, in accordance with the Parish Council's Public Speaking Arrangements.
4. **To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on**
26th October 2020 (previously circulated).
5. **Budget 2021-2022**
To consider the current revision of the budget. (Clerk's report item 1 and budget v4a ^[2].)
6. **Internet Banking**
To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 2.)
7. **Clerk's Report**
 - i. VOIP Project Update (Clerk's report item 3.)

^[2] *Committee members only, other members on request.*

Abbots Langley Parish Council
Clerk's Report - F&A - November 2020

1. Budget 2021-2022

Update and actions since the review at the November meeting of the Parish Council, still areas that are work in progress, but getting closer to a final budget:

- 2.5% precept increase added, this may be subject to amendment if there is any "pick up" in the Band D Base number received from Three Rivers District Council
- We usually review hall hire and bar revenue close to the December revision of the budget, so we can better predict income until the end of the financial year. This will still take place but there will probably be little change from the estimates in this revision (v4a) of the budget.
- Earmarked reserve for Election Expenses increased from previously suggested £4,000/pa to £5,000/pa as this better tracks previous costs.
- Works Team wages split is where the total of the employment costs of this team are broken down over the various work areas such as Playing Fields, Litter, Play Areas, etc.

The split is usually based on an analysis of the work undertaken since the start of the financial year. This year is considerably different to any in the past, so taking a pragmatic view I have used the splits calculated on 2019-2020 workload as this is more "real" than current data.

- Henderson Hall grant is budgeted at the same level as last year. I have had some initial discussions with directors of the Hub Co. and they will be coming forward with a grant application for review by this committee in December. The budget can then be updated accordingly.
- Planning and Highways Committee have yet to review their budget page. My fault I missed the last meeting, they will review at their 2nd December meeting.
- Estimated General Fund balance at the end of 2020-2021 & budgeted end 2021-2022 higher than we would expect normally, main reason is no increase in General Reserve and only limited increases in Earmarked Reserves. This is probably a pragmatic outcome and dependant on the situation in Spring/Summer 2021, this is an area that will require further review.

2. Internet Banking & Payments

Currently officers use internet banking for "enquiry only", downloading statements and checking transactions. All payments are made by cheque or mainly utilities by direct debit.

We are increasingly finding suppliers are no longer accepting payment by cheque. This creates problems as staff then must pay in cheques at a Lloyds branch, which is both time consuming and impractical.

The Parish Council needs to move to making payments by internet banking.

Lloyds have developed their payments system so it is possible to have multiple authorisation levels, but having members going online to authorise payments creates another challenge, as it is impractical for all payment documentation to be made available online for review. Members authorising payments is no longer a legal requirement.

It is now appropriate, given that the robustness of the Parish Council's procedures and years of clean audit reports, that officers are made responsible for making online payments.

I would welcome members views and if agreed I will draft the relevant policies and procedures for approval at the December meeting of this committee.

Consideration also needs to be given to issuing senior staff with a council credit card for small purchases and online transactions. This will eliminate the use of personal cards and subsequent claim back.

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Both Lloyds and Barclays operate a Public Sector credit card, talking to colleagues in Herts the Barclays Government Procurement card (GPC) seems to be the one most local councils use.

3. VOIP Telephone System

Costs

I reported initial project costs to the October meeting of this committee. I "high sided" some of the numbers as they were not finalised when I produced the meeting reports.

Following finalisation of all the costs, the updated numbers are:

Operating costs: Savings increased to £760/pa from the £625/pa reported.

Hardware costs: Reduced from £2,562 to £2,234 reported.

Project Update

The hardware has been delivered to Nixuss and is in the process of being configured and having directories loaded, etc. The handsets will then be installed in the office, Manor House and Depot and they can be used for internal calls. Once everything is working the phone numbers will be ported to the new service.

Tim Perkins

Clerk to the Council
16th November 2020

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