

## Abbots Langley Parish Council

Council Offices  
Langley Road  
Abbots Langley  
Herts  
WD5 0EJ

Contact Details for Meeting Link  
01923 265139  
[clerk@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk)

15th December 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 <sup>[1]</sup> on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> December 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

<sup>[1]</sup> *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. **Henderson Hub Co. Grant Application 2021-2022**  
To consider:
  - i. Grant Application. (Clerk's report item 1 and enclosed application <sup>[2]</sup>.)
  - ii. Governance (Clerk's report item 2.)
5. **External Audit 2019-2020**  
To consider the External Auditor's report, recommend approval and acceptance of the report and audit certificate to the Parish Council. (Certificate sec. 3 of the enclosed annual return <sup>[2]</sup>.)
6. **Internal Audit 2020-2021**  
To consider the first interim report from the Internal Auditors and recommend acceptance and approval to the Parish Council. (Enclosed <sup>[2]</sup>.)
7. **Budget 2021-2022**
  - i. To consider the latest revision of the budget (v5b), agree any final updates and recommend its approval to the Parish Council. (Clerk's report item 3 and budget <sup>[2]</sup> following Leisure Committee review.)
  - ii. To consider the level of precept required to support the budget and recommend to the Parish Council.

Abbots Langley Parish Council

**8. Internet Banking**

To consider the draft of the policy and procedures for the above. (Enclosed.)

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

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

**1. Henderson Hub Co. Grant - Application**

Enclosed is a grant application from the Henderson Hub Co. I have agreed that they do not need to complete the usual application form as all the required information and more, is included in the application document.

In summary the Hub Co. are requesting a grant of £30,000 which will support the community activities and operations of the Hub as it recovers from the pandemic.

Crucially the grant supports the retention of a part time manager without which the trajectory of the recovery would be a lot slower. As detailed within the application the grant will also support the aims of the Hub Co. in creating a sustainable organisation.

**Positives**

- Despite a very difficult budgeting process for FY 2021-2022 the Parish Council could make funds available for this grant, without placing undue stress on other areas of the budget.
- Whilst there is still significant uncertainty around the post-pandemic recovery of most businesses and charitable organisations, the grant will put the Hub Co. in the best place possible when the recovery gains momentum.
- It avoids the Henderson Hall being returned to the Parish Council. As has been discussed at length in the past the Parish Council is not the right organisation to operate and develop a community arts based facility.
- Following the recent Deed of Variation to the lease, if the Hub Co. wanted to break the lease this must be done by the beginning of March 2021, prior to the keys being returned six months later. If this were to happen then the grant would not be paid.
- Whilst the grant would be a significant expenditure, if the hall was returned to the Parish Council, as I have previously reported to this committee, I would estimate costs of £1,000-£1,200/month would accrue for energy, utilities, insurance, security systems, plus further expenditure on caretaking, maintenance works and the associated staff and management costs.

**Negatives**

- If the recovery is significantly slower than hoped for, if the vaccines do not bring the pandemic under control, or if there are further lockdowns these, individually or collectively, will put further pressure of the Hub Co.'s business.

**Recommendations**

- This committee recommend approval to the Parish Council that a grant of £30,000 be paid to the Henderson Hub Co. in one tranche in April 2021. If the lease break notice is served in March 2021 the grant will be withheld.
- At the July 2021 meeting of this committee members:
  - i. Review the financial recovery of the Hub Co.'s operations.
  - ii. The longer term requirements for grant funding, to assist with the Hub Co.'s business and financial planning.
  - iii. Possible realignment of the lease break dates so they fit better with financial planning cycles.

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

**2. Henderson Hub Co. Grant - Governance**

Most years this grant is the largest that the Parish Council will award and as such it always attracts the attention of the auditors. The governance of the award process is important and as I may not be around for the audits next financial year, I thought it worth documenting the process as a formal record for members and the auditors.

- Nov 2020 - Clerk and directors of the Hub Co. held two virtual meetings to discuss the process and detail of the grant application.
- Dec 2020 - Content of application finalised by Hub Co. Confirmation received that the Hub Co. directors and Managing Trustees support the application.
- Dec 2020 - Finance and Administration Committee review the application and through the Clerk raise any points of clarification.
- Dec 2020 - Finance & Administration Committee recommend (or otherwise) the grant application to Parish Council for consideration.
- Jan 2021 - Parish Council consider grant award.
- April 2021 - Grant paid subject to lease break not being notified.

**3. Budget 2021-2022**

As usual by the time we get to the December meeting of this committee the budget is getting close to final. Officers will have a brief review at the beginning of January to pick up any updates, but these are generally minor in nature and only serve to improve accuracy in the estimated expenditure at year end.

Key though is agreeing what precept increase this committee want to recommend to PC.

It was discussed at the last F&A meeting that members were prepared to support a residents Band D increase of 2.5%.

However, not entirely surprisingly the Band D Base number has fallen by 1.725% (2020-2021= 8773.4 to 2021-2022 = 8.622.1).

This means there is less overall Council Tax being paid into TRDC. There are multiple factors that build up this complex equation, but higher Council Tax Support payments and more single households are probably the key drivers. Decreases in a similar range are being reported by Clerks in other local authority areas.

The key numbers are on p.24 of the budget book "Precept Options".

- If members want to set a resident's Band D Precept that increases by only 2.5% the 2021-2022 Precept increase can only be £5,600. This will generate a resident's Band D of £89.14 an increase of £2.17 (+2.5%).
- Or if members want to increase the precept by 2.5% this will have the effect of increasing the resident's Band D Precept by £3.74/p (+4.3%), but will generate an additional £19,075 in precept income.
- Options between either of these points are clearly open for consideration.

**4. Internet Banking**

Draft of the policy and procedures for the above are enclosed for member's consideration.

At the November meeting of this committee members had given outline approval to apply for a Parish Council credit card to be used by key staff for small and online purchases. The policy and procedures is still work in progress and will be brought to the January meeting of this committee for consideration.

**Tim Perkins**

Clerk to the Council  
15th December 2020

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