

FINANCE REPORT – ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING 6th APRIL 2021

My report is intended to cover the financial position of the Council for the fiscal years 2020/21 and 2021/22. The financial year of the Council is April to March, so at the time of writing of this report (March 29th) the information for 2021/22 is not finalised. You should also bear in mind that the accounts are prepared on the basis of payments made, so for some commitments e.g. orders placed or invoices received, but not paid by the end of the financial year, the expenditure will effectively slip into the next year.

The approved accounts for 2020/21 can be summarised as follows:

Bank balance b/f	£299,657
Precept	£65,794
VAT reclaims	£7,755
Other income	£8,866 (Grants, allotments, Sports Ctr)
Expenditure	(£60,552)
Bank balance c/f	£314,311

The major items of expenditure were:

Grass, hedges & trees maint	£31,986
Village Hall Support	£6,925 (partly covered by S106 funding)
Clerk Fees	£7,208
Insurance	£4,476
Play Areas	£3,015
Allotments	£3,007 (partly covered by rent charges)

The accounts for 2020/21 have been approved by the Parish Council's auditors.

The provisional accounts for 2021/22 at the time of writing this report can be summarised as follows:

Bank balance b/f	£314,311
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Precept	£70,159
Other income	£17,416 (Grants, allotments, VAT claims)
Expenditure	(£78,833)
Bank balance c/f	£322,953

The major items of expenditure were:

Grass, hedges & trees maint	£24,368
Children's activity club	£12,600 (partly covered by grant funding)
Clerk Fees	£8,897
Play Areas	£6,539 (mainly repairs)
Sports amenities	£4,735 (mainly repairs due to vandalism)
Insurance	£4,612
Energy	£3,264 (partly covered by CBC funding)

The carried forward balance of £323k does sound high, so I do need to draw attention to balances of S106 funding ring fenced for particular purposes. At the end of 2021/22 there was £94k held against the Play Areas in the Miller homes development and £106k held against the SCSC. In addition the Parish Council maintains a minimum reserve of £15k and had outstanding commitments of £6k where invoices are being waited for. A further £78k is also allocated to current spending plans, some of which has been delayed by COVID restrictions. This brings the uncommitted balance being brought forward at the end of 2021/22 down to £24k.

As highlighted in previous years, the major ongoing expenditure incurred by the Parish Council is on grass, hedges and trees maintenance. The Parish Council is responsible for significant areas including cutting the Millennium Green. To help with the management of these costs, the Parish Council made available during 2019/20 a large mower to Silsoe Cricket Club which is now used by them to cut the cricket pitch and football pitches by the Sports Centre.

This, along with a slightly shorter growing season in 2021, meant grass cutting costs were lower in 2021 compared with 2020.

The precept for 2021/22 was £70.1k. For the current year just started, 2022/23, the Parish Council has approved a budget where the Precept cost per household increased by 4.0% from 2021/22 to give a total precept value of £73.4k. However planned expenditure of £154k means the uncommitted balance from 2021/22 will be used in part to cover the shortfall, leaving £24k available for new projects. Particular areas which the Parish Council are looking at and which will be covered in other reports include: running a children's activity club in the summer, traffic calming, street lighting, the Cage, and improvements to the play area by the Millennium Green.

Finally, I should also mention that the Parish Council continues in its efforts to close the transfer of the promised community facilities agreed with Cranfield University many years ago. In particular this means the community woodland area, village green area to the West of Barton Road, and new play areas on the Bloor Homes estate. If the Parish Council is able to take ownership of these facilities on behalf of the village, it will mean ultimately it becomes financially responsible for their ongoing maintenance. However, negotiations with the developer are proving to be difficult and it is impossible to forecast with any confidence what the result of these will be and the impact on the Parish Council's future finances.

Philip Kevan

Councillor, Silsoe Parish Council

29th March 2022