

WASHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL



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Finance Committee Meeting

MINUTES of the Finance Committee Meeting held on Monday 25th November 2024 at Washington Village Hall (Doré Room)

PRESENT: Cllr S Buddell, Cllr P Heeley (Chairman), Cllr T Keech and Cllr A Perkins

ALSO: Clerk to the Council. There were no members of the public.

The meeting was opened by the Chairman at 7:15pm.

F/24/11/1 To Receive Apologies for absence

The Committee **RESOLVED** to **RECEIVE** and **ACCEPT** apologies from Cllr Lisher.

F/24/11/2 To Receive Declarations of Interest.

None declared as defined under the Localism Act 2011 and the Council's Code of Conduct

F/24/11/3 Minutes of the last meeting on 17th June 2024

It was **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the minutes of the [Finance Committee Meeting](#) held on 15th July 2024.

F/24/11/4 Public Session

None present

F/24/11/5 Payroll

The Committee considered [quotations](#) for outsourcing the Council's Payroll.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend Contractor B at the annual cost of £519, for consideration at the next Full Council Meeting, subject to provision in the draft 2025.26 draft budget and terms of contract by the service provider.

F/24/11/6 2024/25 Budget Review

To Report and Review the following:

- [Budget 2024.25 vs 2023.24](#)
- [Actual Cash Position 1st April 2024](#)
- [Current Budget Position](#)

The Committee reviewed the reports and **RESOLVED** that they be **NOTED**.

F/24/11/7 2025/26 Draft Budget and Precept

To Review and Recommend the Council's draft 2025.26 Budget and Precept.

The Committee considered the proposed 2025.26 Budget and precept requirement of £66,816.31 which would result in a Band D of £59.50 per annum, an increase from £40.11 in the current year (48%). The average Band D in England in 2024/25 was £85.89 so Washington remains below the national average.

The following were amongst the points noted:

- It had been a busy few years for the Parish Council particularly in dealing with major developments in the parish including Rampion 2. This trend was likely to continue when projects go ahead and as pressure grows for more development.
- The electorate had been largely shielded from these increased costs over the years by the council being able to produce a balanced budget without significant precept increases. If the electorate wants to continue the current level of provision, the costs would necessitate sustained increases to the precept
- The council holds good reserves, which had been anticipated to cover any shortfalls. However, this has been largely unnecessary to date. In 2023/24, overhead costs of £46,783 were less than the council's income of £47,465. In 2024/25, forecast operating costs are £55,534, an increase of 18.7%. The draft budget for 2025/6 currently shows costs of £71,419. At this level, the council's costs would have increased by 50% since 2023/4.
- The main drivers of the budget increases in the current year had been
 - Increase in overall payroll costs - £4,054 including a back payment of staff pension
 - Office expenses - £1,432
 - Tree works - £2,417
 - Repairs and maintenance - £4,827
- CIL monies had been used to fund a number of improvements to the Village Hall, and the provision of new noticeboards, two Speed Indicator Devices and new playground surfaces.
- There would be a 1.2 % increase in employer's national insurance rates in April and that local councils would not be eligible for any Government compensation;
- The draft budget includes costs for outsourcing staff payroll as it was not desirable for this to be carried out by staff as is usual for some of the smaller councils;
- Overall 25/26 earmarked reserves are budgeted to decrease from £67,600 to £61,500 – this reduction will mitigate the impact of the overall cost increases on the precept request
- Major driver of the decrease in the 25/26 reserves is reducing the general reserve to 50% of the annual operating cost budget. The current balance appears to be too high based on the 24/25 forecast expenditure – this has saved some £12,000
- The 25/26 reserve for highways improvements of £1,500 has been removed as this should be the responsibility of the County Council
- The 25/26 draft budget includes an increase in reserves for future improvements to the Recreation Grounds, MUGA, Play Area and closed graveyard.

Members discussed various options to balance the 25/26 budget with a smaller precept increase, starting at 5%.


Following a discussion the Committee **RESOLVED** that Cllr Heeley and Cllr Keech work on presenting the draft 2025.26 budget and precept proposal based on suggestions at the meeting. The Chairman would be informed and the Clerk would advise. The recommended budget and precept would be finalised at a further Finance Meeting before being presented to Full Council on Monday 6th January 2025 for approval.

F/24/11/8 Next Finance Committee Meeting.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to meet on Monday 6th January 2025 at 7:00pm. Cllr Perkins gave his apologies for this meeting and the Full Council Meeting which follows.

There being no further business to transact, the meeting closed at 8:15pm

Signed.....

A yellow rectangular box redacting the signature of the person who signed the minutes.

Dated.....

6.1.25