

Fradley and Streethay Parish Council



**Minutes of the Virtual Parish Council Finance Committee meeting held at 7:00pm
on Thursday 14 January 2021**

Present: Councillors Simon Roberts (Chair) Alan Cope (Vice-Chair) Harry Warburton, Glen Bown and Jurgen Nijim

In Attendance: District Cllr Derick Cross and M Wilcox and Clare Orme (Clerk).

The Chair welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting of the Parish Council Finance Committee Meeting and explained how the meeting would operate. Introductions then took place.

1. Minute Number F01/2021 - To receive and approve apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Minute Number F02/2021 - Declaration of Members' Interests.

There were no Declarations of Members Interests.

3. Minute Number F03/2021 - Public Speaking

4. Minute Number F03/2021/A – Public Speaking

No members of the public were present at the meeting and there was nothing to report.

5. Minute number F03/2021/B – District Council Representatives Report

Cllr Wilcox was present at the meeting but had nothing to report.

Cllr Cross congratulated the Clerk on putting together the budget report, he said that it was an easy document to follow and understand. The Clerk replied that she could not take all the credit as a Councillor had given her help in putting the budget together. Cllr Cross asked why the salaries were creeping up. The Chair explained that there were the normal staff costs in the budget plus an extra £10,000 to employ an extra person to help with the list of projects that the Council were planning as per the project tracker over the next five years. The Chair explained that the Clerks had been through a busy year putting in place proper policies and procedures etc and if the Parish Council wanted to be more proactive, then more needed to be invested in staff. Cllr Cross reported on the state of the Worthington Road Play Area and the fact that a piece of equipment had been decommissioned for the last two and half years, which needed to be replaced. The Chair explained that the refurbishment of the play areas would be part of a bigger project and would be discussed in more details later in the meeting, however the £1,500 in the current budget was for maintenance, the Parish Council did already have £12,000 in reserves towards play park refurbishment and other funding would be required to complete this work. It was not lack of funds holding the replacement up but the lack of time to access the whole parks refurbishment.

Cllr Cross raised the £5,000 ringfenced in the budget to build up a maintenance fund for the skate park, he asked the Council to consider doubling this figure. The Chair replied that again this would form part of a bigger project and would be discussed later in the meeting in more detail.

6. Minute Number F03/2021/C –County Council Representatives Report

Cllr Eagland sent her apologies, there was nothing to report.

7. Minute Number F03/2021/D – Police Representatives Report

There were no Police Representatives present at the meeting and there was nothing to report.

8. Minute Number F04/2021 - Variation to the Order of Business.

There were no Variations to the Order of Business.

9. Minute Number F05/2021 - Budget and Precept Setting 2021/2022 – Non-Confidential items

Fradley and Streethay Parish Council



Minutes of the Virtual Parish Council Finance Committee meeting held at 7:00pm on Thursday 14 January 2021

The RFO shared the reduced reserves spreadsheet produced by Cllr Bown and the Chair to predict and track the projects over the next five years. This document was discussed in detail.

The Chairman explained that this document had been produced to look at the five-year project tracker, this was to put some costs against each project to work out if they were possible to achieve. The Chair explained that it was good having a lot of projects on the table, but the Council needed to have a financial plan for how to take them forward to make sure they could be achieved. The two critical items were the Parish Council Office/Hub and the Community Building at Streethay, other items on the lists after this were less critical but desired. The main item the Council wants to look at next would be the Worthington Road Play Park and Skate Park. The proposal from the Chair was an extra member of staff to complete funding applications and projects. The idea would be to employ somebody to complete grant funding applications to try and obtain further funding. HS2 have 43 million pounds that they want to spend and are asking the Council to put in funding applications to be spent on local projects. The Chair did not feel that the Clerk and Clerk Assistant had enough time or further capacity to put their heart and soul into obtaining more grant funding. The Clerks Assistant was already in the process of completing a funding application for £75,000, towards the refurbishment of the Streethay Play Area but this was a long process.

Cllr Bown explained that the Council had a huge project list which, under normal circumstances the Council would possibly be able to fund however, the two big community projects, the Parish Council Office/Hub, and the Community Building at Streethay would gobble up the reserves and other funding would be required. The Council needed to look at what they could and could not do realistically. Therefore, the Council had looked at all sources of income that they were likely to obtain from Section 106 and CiL monies. Some figures quoted in the spreadsheet were accurate costs, but others stated were predicted costs, this was to establish where grant funding would be required. The Council anticipates that they would need grant funding for both parks and the skate park. If the Council did not receive the required grant funding for such projects, they would need to look at reprioritising the five-year projections to be able to achieve the most important projects. The Council could rely on HS2 for some funding, but this would be a lot of work. The Council now had a better budgeting process because they have better Clerks with more capacity. However, the Council did not want to take up the Clerks capacity in applying for grant funding streams, this is where the extra £10k budget had come from. The Council would possibly look to employ somebody on a temporary, part time basis to complete funding application and follow projects through.

The RFO screen shared the draft budget.

Resolved: The Finance Committee to recommend to full Council at their meeting on 21 January 2021, that the budget be approved with the following amendments:

- **To add a budget of £10,000 to employ a dedicated member of staff to complete funding applications and see projects through to completion, this would be on a temporary contract part time.**
- **To add a further £150 to the Lamppost poppy project, the Council to plan where they would install the poppies around the village. The Council to consider making it a community project by encouraging residents to purchase poppies to put on their own gates and front doors.**



Fradley and Streethay Parish Council

Minutes of the Virtual Parish Council Finance Committee meeting held at 7:00pm
on Thursday 14 January 2021

- ***To reduce the budget for the yearly award scheme from £500 to £100.***

At this point in the meeting the contribution of £5,000 to support Alrewas Parish Council to fight the Cemex Planning Application was discussed in detail. It was established that HS2 had not chosen Cemex at this time to deliver sand and gravel for the HS2 project. Under an FOI request, Alrewas Parish Council had also established that HS2 did not feel they required further capacity of sand and gravel.

Resolved: The Finance Committee to recommend to full Council at their meeting on 21 January 2021, that the budget be approved with the following amendments:

- ***To add £5,000 to the budget to help Alrewas Parish Council fight the Cemex Planning Application. Fradley and Streethay Parish Council would not just hand over a cheque, a process for Alrewas Parish Council to claim the funds as required would need to be put into place. The money would remain in reserves ring-fenced until required. This would match the £5,000 Alrewas Parish Council were putting a side to fight the application.***
- ***To agree all other budgets and headings be agreed as per the draft budget prepared by the RFO with no other amendments.***

At this point in the meeting the Balance sheet was discussed.

At this point in the meeting the ring-fenced reserves sheet was explained and considered.

The RFO explained that ring-fenced section 106 money was restricted and could only be used for the specific purpose to which it was given. The RFO explained that in previous years these funds had not been reduced properly. This had now been rectified and maintenance costs etc were being allocated properly.

The Chair explained that CiL money ring-fenced was also restricted. The RFO explained that CiL money could only be spent on items that benefited the community, for example replacing play equipment, CiL money could be used to help achieve some of the projects on the list.

The RFO explained that general reserves and although they were allocated to specific items for the purpose of the reserve sheet, these funds could potentially be redirected to other projects if required, providing the Council had clear records and an audit trail in the minutes of the decisions taken. The Chair explained that currently the Council only had £13,220 in general reserve. Best Practice stated that Councils should hold at least 3 months running costs in reserves. Therefore, the Council was a little short of this target and proposed that any unspent funds as of 31 March 2021, should be transferred to the General reserves.

Resolved: The Finance Committee to recommend to full Council at their meeting on 21 January 2021, that any funds unspent as of 31 March 2021, should be transferred to the General Reserve Budget to try and build up the 3 months running costs as per best practice.

At this point in the meeting the Precept setting was discussed and considered.

The RFO explained that in 2020/2021 the calculation was based on 2,131.30 band D properties. For 2021/2022 the calculation would be based on 2,208.80 band D properties. This would be an increase of 77.5 band D properties an increase of 3.636%. In 2020/2021 the Precept was set at

Fradley and Streethay Parish Council



Minutes of the Virtual Parish Council Finance Committee meeting held at 7:00pm on Thursday 14 January 2021

£131,306.00, which equated to a rate of £61.61 per household per year, The RFO recommended that the starting point for 2021/2022 to keep this at £61.61 per household for the year should therefore be £136,048.17, this would include the increase of the 77.5 extra band D properties allocated.

The RFO explained that the Government had agreed not to cap Parish Council's precepts again this year, but eventually they would. It had been suggested that if the cap on precepts was brought in, this would be at possibly 2%. Any precept request over and above the cap in the future would be subject to a referendum.

The RFO was asked if the Parish Council could reduce their precept payments in the future. The RFO replied that a Parish Council could indeed reduce the precept if they wished, however she would recommend that the Council air on the side of caution especially with the threat of a cap being brought in by the Government in the future.

Resolved: With Cllr Roberts, Cope, Warburton and Nijim in agreement and Cllr Bown against. The Finance Committee to recommend to full Council at their meeting on 21 January 2021, to increase the Precept for 2021/2022 from £131,306 to £161,893.00 to allow more of the planned projects to be completed. This would be an increase from £61.61 per household per year to £73.29 per household for the year, a percentage increase of 18.97%

Resolved: The Finance Committee to recommend to full Council at their meeting on 21 January 2021, to put together a comprehensive explanation/public statement of the reasoning for the increase in the precept for members of the public.

10. Minute Number F06/2021 - To consider a resolution under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings Act 1960) to exclude members of the Public

Resolved: Fradley and Streethay Parish Council agreed that under the Public Bodies (Admission of Meetings Act 1960) to exclude the press and public from the next part of the meeting.

a) Budget and Precept Setting 2021/2022 – Confidential Items relating to Staff salaries and Pensions

Resolved: The Finance Committee to recommend to full Council at their meeting on 21 January 2021, that the budget for the staff salaries to be set as quoted, but the increase on staff salaries to be frozen from April 2021, until the NJC information is received in relation to any increase. This is since the government has not yet agreed if there will be a pay freeze for Parish Council Staff. If the NJC rate for a pay increase is agreed, it will be applied to the rate agreed by the NJC at that time and back dated to 1 April 2022. The Clerk explained that she did not anticipate the NJC making any decision until at least October 2021.

The date and time of the next Zoom Parish Council Meeting would be 21 January 2021 at 7pm via Zoom.

There being no other business the chair closed the meeting at 9.30pm