

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on 3rd December 2018 at 7.30pm

Present

Mr Ed Hunt (chair), Mr Tom Haywood, Ms Olivia Newton, Ms Margaret Wild (clerk)

1. Apologies

None

2. Matters arising

The meeting has been held to prepare for the 2019/2020 precept submission. The aim was to agree if a precept increase should be put forward, if so how much and why, and how to communicate the increase.

What do we currently do

EH outlined the roles and responsibilities of Cotesbach Parish Council. These were agreed as follows:

- Planning applications – domestic and major
- Dealing with highways (A426 and local):
 - Traffic calming
 - Gulleys / gutters
- Industrial neighbours – Tarmac / Magna Park
- Maintaining some local amenities:
 - Telephone box / defibrillator
 - Village Pond
 - Water Pump
- Managing local funding sources:
 - Eight Parishes CIC
 - Landfill communities fund
 - Gazeley community fund
- Residents' interests:
 - Speeding
 - Noise
 - Parking
 - Difficult neighbours
 - Flies
 - Smells
 - Security / crime
- Finances and governance

What we currently don't do

EH outlined the responsibilities we don't have, nor will we expect to have in the future, which typically a parish council may have:

- Management and financial responsibility for the Village Hall
- Maintenance of a playing field
- Maintenance and costs of street lighting
- Bus stops
- Church / churchyard
- Allotments

What we want to do

EH asked councillors what we want to do as a parish council that might require some resource or cost. This was not intended to be a clear plan for 2018/19 but a list of items that we should agree to action and arrange at a later date. Items of interest to the council included:

- Making the village look good (low cost / no cost):
 - Keeping signs clean
 - Flowers at either end of village
 - Clearing back trees
 - Litter picking
- Making the village look good (medium cost items):
 - Village Pond maintenance (£200 pa?)
 - Flower boxes at either end of village
 - Dog bins (£200 pa for cleaning?)
 - Refurbishing village pump
 - Village hall noticeboard (£1,500 capital)
- Keeping village safe
 - Install CCTV
 - Using other peoples' CCTV (list of who's got it)
 - CCTV signs (each end of village / in houses)
- Highways
 - Repainting Main Street road speed signs
 - Traffic management – A426: pedestrian signing / speed restriction / warning lights / speed cameras / police checks
 - Traffic management – Main Street - Wheelie Bins stickers?
- Promoting key events / milestones during the year (peasants revolt, other cotesbach history...)

Other items we want to do

- Securing more funding sources
- Better governance – knowing key dates for councils / part of policy shaping / better known on the map for good things
- Being empowered to spend money or find solutions
- Being recognised as a good council
- Making an impact with the residents and measuring this (meeting attendance / feedback?)

Current finances

EH outlined the current cashbook and what we use the money for

- Precept Income currently c. £850/yr
- Outgoings typically c. £755/yr
- Current balance: c. £1,500 (including Q3 precept)
- Suggested ongoing position: £600 cash contingency - 1 month of any potential staff funds + unexpected costs, e.g. elections
- Other known funding – 8 parishes CIC £6,811; Magna Park Community Fund – competitive grant, amount on application max £2,500
- Total available capital for potential investment (surplus cash £900 + known funding sources £6,811): £7,711

Current challenges

EH explained why we need to change the precept, and specifically why a clerk is useful

- We are not running compliantly – a councillor is the responsible financial person which is not permitted
- We are stretched to administer the council effectively – part time secretary, most councillors working full time
- It is increasingly complex – dealing with district and county requirements, governance, policies, finance, significant planning activities and large industrial neighbours
- We want to be good at what we do and spare the time to contribute actively rather than carry out admin

What's needed to do what we want to do?

- Hire a clerk who will carry out the administration and act as the responsible financial officer.
- Decide on key amenities, activities and campaigns that we will focus on to deliver

How much is this going to cost?

- Operating costs:
 - Clerk - £2,087 gross per annum based on 3 hours per week @£13.37 per hour (£10 per hour net)
 - Other operating costs - £855 (audit / village hall / election / insurance etc)
 - Additional operating costs - £500 (village pond maintenance / dog bins / flowers for new flower boxes etc)
 - Total: £3,442
- Capital cost items:
 - Up to £4,700 over next 12 months (notice board, refurb village pump, flower boxes, CCTV). Capital cost items should be funded from grants etc
- New required annual budget for operating costs: £3,442 minimum + £600 contingency = £4,042
- Suggested precept for 2019/20 = £28.18 per household = £2,900

Discussion

- The councillors were in agreement that a clerk does justify an increase to the precept, in addition to the fact that the precept hasn't been changed for many years and is well below most villages of our size
Action: EH to confirm any tax implications of hiring a clerk and any requirements with HMRC to become an employer

Next steps

- Communicate to village (Cotesbach communicator + flyer) – EH to create flyer / write communicator article
- Bring forward council meeting to 14th January so a decision can be made and the new precept submitted to HDC before the 18th January deadline