



Minutes of Cobham Parish Council's Budget Meeting,

Monday 7 December 2020 at 7.30pm

Meeting took place on Zoom

Present

Cllr Mike Booth (Chairman), Cllr Steve Dyer (Vice Chairman)

Cllr Ben Smith, Cllr Rosemary Dymond, Cllr Matt Mason

Cllr Gabriella Gabbitas, Cllr Margaret Haig, Cllr Mat Peterson-Pierce

Present

Mrs Tina Sampson, Mr Charles Amis (Clerk)

1. Apologies for absence – Cllr Robert Pryor – family commitments
2. Declarations of interest – None raised
3. Minutes: to confirm the minutes of 2nd November 2020, proposed as a true record by Cllr Haig and seconded by Cllr Dyer.
4. Grant Request – Cllr Booth said that Cobham Parish Council should maintain the current grant request system where organisations have to apply for a grant rather than receiving a grant automatically which had been recommended by KALC.

Cllr Dymond said the Community Bus should receive a grant automatically. Cllr Peterson-Pearce said the other organisations should apply for a grant but the community bus provides value and CPC should keep funding. Previously the village magazine, Luddesdown Rights of Way Group, Youth Club had received a grant from CPC automatically. The Royal British Legion receives a donation. The preschool could apply for a grant following the theft of their shed, however this would be a matter for them. Cllr Mason said there was only £1000 for grants and £2000 should be allocated.

Action: It was suggested that the community grant request forms additionally be shown on the noticeboards as this gives organisations opportunities to apply.

Cllr Booth thought the forms should be sent to organisations that have previously benefited.

5. Cllr Peterson-Pierce questioned CPC's membership of these organisations as CPC don't seem to get much from the membership. Cllr Dyer said that 90% of Kent parish councils are members of KALC and they are a not for profit organisation that provides useful information

and support. The new parish clerk had also been recruited through the KALC website. Mrs Sampson said that in the past KALC had provided legal advice and advice on propriety. KALC training is tailored to local government. Cllr Dyer said their training was cheaper than other providers. Cllr Dymond said the planning training course was useful and our local MPs and GBC were supportive of KALC. It was agreed that CPC would remain a member of KALC and CPRE.

6. Cllr Booth said last year CPC spent nearly £30,000 against a precept of £21,000 which is significantly over budget. Cllr Peterson-Pierce said that CPC had spent £9,500 on unexpected budget items and had been £5000 over budget more than we had anticipated but the council accounts are not in deficit. The budget planning needs to be more risk averse even though the PC had not gone into deficit in the account and money had not been taken from the reserves. Better itemisation on what might be needed should be in place. Cllr Booth said there had been unexpected items such as cutting back the yew trees at the war memorial, resurfacing The Landway, treating the Knotweed, replacing the fencing around the lower sports field, which was a shared cost with the Sports Association. Cllr Mason asked if there were any further issues that CPC needed for this year.

Tina Sampson said that CPC were invited to apply for a business interruption grant of £10,000 from GBC. GBC explained that the grant was to help out parts of the community who may have suffered during the lockdown, it appears that other parish councils in Gravesham had not been aware of the grant. There was some concern if we were eligible, however the former clerk contacted GBC who confirmed that CPC were eligible. Cllrs Dymond and Mason said that CPC need to be careful how they spend the grant as this will show in CPC's audit. It was further discussed that if there were any community clubs projects needed any assistance.

Cllr Peterson-Pearce suggested using the same community grant scheme forms for the business interruption grant. Organisations within the parish could apply for a grant and these could be put on the website or in the local shops.

Action: Cllr Peterson-Pearce said he would check the current community grant scheme forms and amend as necessary for local organisations to apply for the business interruption grant.

7. Compare spending – Cllr Peterson-Pearce suggested increasing the precept. Cllr Booth said that the cost of employing a clerk had increased. Cllr Peterson-Pearce said the parish council needed to be more transparent by communicating the budget more proactively. Cllr Mason asked if parishioners knew what the parish council did. Cllr Dymond said there was the annual report of the parish council's work as well as the Annual Meeting. Cllr Mason said that parishioners may not look at the annual report or the minutes from the meetings but they were more likely to look at something on Facebook or the website. Cllr Haig said there was no paper parish magazine now and suggested approaching a local printer to produce a quarterly newsletter to distribute around the parish. Cllr Peterson-Pearce said a lot of people are online and there are noticeboards and the website. Cllr Haig said that elderly people were not necessarily online. Tina Sampson explained that the parish magazine was on hold due to safety concerns relating to the volunteers and distributors. Cllr Dymond said the magazine could be sent out to organisations.

Action: Cllr Peterson-Pearce said he would produce some ideas on publicising the parish council's achievements.

Cllr Dyer said that previous precepts had been kept very low but because KCC and GBC are now devolving matters down to the parish level the precept has needed to increase. Cllr Booth said that Cobham's precept was lower than other villages.

- Insurance – Remains the same
- Subscriptions – KALC and CPRE £800 - £1,000
- Satswana - £150. Tina Sampson said that Satswana provide data protection assistance and are recognised by the ICO. Tina Sampson had previously worked in the field of data protection. However the new clerk, Charles Amis, does not have much experience of GDPR. Cllr Booth said that CPC should use Satswana. KALC had recommended Satswana plus two other companies who were more expensive. Cllr Dyer said that Satswana would be an insurance policy for CPC.
- Training - £1,000. Cllr Booth said that we need to support the new clerk through ILCA cost £99 and CILCA cost £390. The budget also includes Councillor training.
- Travel Expenses – Cllr Booth said that the HMRC approved rate is 45p per mile for mileage and can be claimed where relevant.
- The new clerk has opted into the Pension scheme and the contribution would be £220 per year.

The toilets remain closed for the foreseeable future. Cllr Mason asked what CPC wanted to do with the toilets after Covid 19. **Action:** Further discussion to be had.

- The budget for the Children's' Corner would be £1000 instead of £2000. The playground equipment needs cleaning and GBC had checked the playground and found rust on the play equipment and torn matting. Cllr Mason and Cllr Peterson-Pearce suggested putting some money aside each year and this should be ring fenced. Cllr Peterson-Pearce had looked at several grant giving organisations but CPC would need to match the funding.
- Cllr Booth said there was no further work was needed to The Landway.
- Cllr Booth said that £500 should be budgeted for additional treatment of the Knotweed next year. The western boundary of the sports field needed to be tidied up and the, KCC Rights of Way officer, would be making sure CPC resolved this. It was suggested that CPC could share the costs with the Sports Association, however further consideration needs to be given on whether the CPC should pay for all the work. At a recent event Cllr Booth had spoken to a Clerk from Sundridge Parish Council who spend a lot of money each year maintaining their playing fields. The Sports Association over the years have picked up almost all of the maintenance costs for the playing fields. Cllr Peterson-Pearce said the Sports Association were getting a good deal. Cllr Haig said the sports field had been donated to CPC after the First World War for the use of sport/recreation. Cllr Dyer said the main income for the Sports Association is the Cobham Fete held annually on the August Bank Holiday Monday. The Sports Association work hard for the money they receive and are able to subsidise the clubs within the Cobham Sports Association which includes Cricket, Football, Tennis and Netball for all ages & sexes providing facilities which are the envy of many villages.

- Cllr Booth said that not much needs doing with the village pump apart from some repairs to the wall. Cllr Peterson-Pearce asked if the maintenance man for Cobham parish, could carry out the work but Cllr Dymond said the brickwork was a specialist job. Cllr Dyer explained that the maintenance man was responsible for litter picking and keeping the parish tidy.
- KCC is looking after the signposts so this could be deleted from the budget spreadsheet. Cllr Mason asked if CPC had budgeted for cutting back the vegetation around the signs but Cllr Booth said this was KCC's responsibility. Cllr Dyer said that KCC had not been cutting back the vegetation so frequently due to cutbacks. There is a swathe programme that is published.
- Cllr Booth said that CPC planned to contribute £5000 towards traffic management scheme from reserves where KCC will be spending up to £16,000 on new bollards in The Street. Cllr Mason said this funding should be subject to what the money is spent on. There is to be a meeting with KCC prior to the traffic scheme proceeding.
- Cllr Booth said the replacement for the Sole Street noticeboard will cost £500. Cllr Peterson-Pearce asked why this was so much as the as the cost was similar to the Cobham Notice Board which was much larger.
- The volunteers were recognised for looking after the war memorial and its grounds.

Cllr Booth said if the precept was increased to £26,000 it would be an increase of £7.38 for the average household in the village. Cllr Mason said the precept should be increased more. CPC are constrained by the current precept. KCC and GBC are reducing their funding and CPC could do so much more. The next 5 years are likely to be more challenging for CPC with large issues such as planning, housing and the Lower Thames Crossing. CPC need to start preparing a fighting fund.

Action: Cllr Booth said he would tidy up the figures and get them ready for the next meeting.

8. Cllr Mason said that Vigo Village had good basic 'no parking' signs around their village and CPC could install similar signs in Church Road, Round Street and Halfpence Lane. Cllr Booth said it was reasonable to install.

Action: CPC to research the installation of no parking signs.

Cllr Mason said Sole Street Church Room looks unsightly and could do with better lighting and landscaping. Cllr Booth agreed it was disgrace and that CPC could contribute towards the repairs. Cllr Peterson-Pierce said there appeared to be not much connection between the fundraisers and those who spent the money. Cllr Haig said that Rev Angela Walker had tried to get Rochester Diocese interested and get regulations in place. The Fundraising Group had disagreed with the original plans. The church wants to use the church rooms. Should CPC pressure Rochester Diocese to do something about the church rooms as everything appears to have stalled. Cllr Dymond said the architect is going ahead with the building regulations. Cllr Peterson-Pearce suggested Cllr Haig ask the PCC if they need CPC to help them.

Cllr Dymond said the Parish had won Silver gilt in Britain in Bloom. The flower troughs had helped. Cllr Dymond was looking for further funding for new troughs and flowers.

Cllr Booth said the area between the Meadow Rooms and the pump was looking untidy. This included the fence, sycamores and poplars.

Cllr Peterson-Pearce said the work to improve the look of the public areas should be spread more evenly around the parish.

Action: Ask Councillors to nominate areas around the parish that could be improved.

Cllr Haig said the dog waste bins are in the wrong place in the sports field. Cllr Booth said he would ask GBC to move the bins to a more suitable place.

Action: Confirm the date for the next parish council meeting.

Cllr Booth and CPC registered their thanks to Tina Sampson for all the work she had done as a parish clerk for Cobham Parish Council. A presentation was made to Tina Sampson at her home.

Meeting closed at 9pm