

Hurworth Parish Council
Finance Committee meeting
held at Hurworth Grange
at 7:00 pm on 26th November 2014

Those present:- Tony Winnett, Jean Peacock, Val Hughes, Peter Foster, Chris Pratt

Also present: Peter Allan, Parish Clerk

1. The Chairman welcomed the council members and made reference to the three councillors who had recently resigned. He expressed the council's thanks and appreciation of the efforts and commitment that Jeff Kemp, Tony Needham and Ken Pattison have made during their period of serving on the council. Each one had made significant contributions and all would be sorely missed. He wished them good luck in their new interests.
2. **Apologies for absence:-**, Ian Holme (Business), Margaret Williams (Social engagement).
3. **Declarations of Interest:**
 - a. Val Hughes (HCA)
 - b. Jean Peacock (HCA)
 - c. Tony Winnett (HCA)
4. **Chairman's Address**
 - a. Councillor vacancies and
 - b. Looking Ahead and Succession Plan
 - There are now three vacancies on the council, and these have left a number of topics no longer being overseen by a councillors. These include:-
 - Highways
 - Pathways and Environmental issues
 - Speed Monitors and traffic issues
 - Flooding issues
 - Representation on the Village Hall committee
 - Representation on the Small and Medium sizes Parish Council Association

The council has several options, viz:-

- Continue until May 2015 with 9 councillors
- Co-opt one, two or three new councillors.
- The General Election is scheduled to take place on Thursday, 7th May 2015.

A debate ensued, which resulted, after a vote, that the following actions be taken.

1. The council has received one applicant wishing to join the council. This person will be invited to meet the Chairman and Clerk, with a view to being co-opted to the council.
2. Two other 'suitable' persons were identified, who will be approached by Val Hughes, to see whether they are interested.

In principle, the council agreed that this is an opportunity for potential new long-term councillors to take advantage of the six months leading up to the election, to see whether they wish to make a long term commitment.

Concern was expressed about the ongoing flooding issues, which Ken Pattison and Tony Needham have been addressing. After discussion, it was agreed that the council ask Ken Pattison if he will continue his involvement as a consultant to the council; a councillor will be assigned to attend future meetings with Mr Pattison. **Action: Clerk to arrange.**

c. The Finance Topics will be addressed under Section 4' of the Agenda.

d. Hurworth Contingency Plan.

The Chairman outlined the necessity to develop and adopt a detailed Contingency Plan, as recommended by NALC. He has taken on the task, and has prepared a 13 page draft report, which he is currently reviewing with Darlington & Durham Risk Management Officer. This will be put before the Council in due course. He requested ring-fencing some funds to support the Contingency Plan. The Flood Contingency Reserve can also be used to support this wider reaching Plan.

Public Meeting

The Chairman stated that he wished to convene a Public Meeting early in the new year to acquaint residents of a number of topics, including:-

- Hurworth Contingency Plan
- Parish Plan Review and Update
- The growth of the Traveller community within Hurworth Parish, and the DBC Planning policy.

The meeting agreed that this meeting should be held, a date to be agreed. It was suggested that the Annual Assembly would be an ideal opportunity to hold this meeting. It was agreed that some money be allocated to meet the expenses; £500 was allocated.

5. **The Minutes of the Finance Committee dated 15th November 2013** were accepted; proposed by Jean Peacock and Seconded by Chris Pratt.
6. Financial Accounts and Forward Budgets to March 2017.

The Clerk had prepared a detailed summary of all the relevant figures, and these were contained in the meeting hand-out.

- a. An update of the Parish Plan is included in the hand-out, which highlights the progress the council has made since 2010, and specifically in the current financial year to date. It was emphasised that when considering future projects, they should be based on the resident's views as expressed in the Parish PI
- b. The 2014-15 Projects were reviewed, as follows:-

Project Name	Proposer	Details	Budget Cost	Comments
Hurworth Grange road	Jeff Kemp		15000	Completed, grant obtained; no cost to HPC.
Hurworth Youth Programme	Ken Pattison		£1000	Also for 2015, appears to be aborted
Legal Consultancy – Freedom of Information	Council		£5000	Refer Fol Not required, will be taken into account is setting 2015 Precept.
Road gritting	John Howard		£1000	Open
Flood contingency	Ken Pattison			£6000 now ring fenced
Highway maintenance	Tony Needham			Not used

Anniversar y of the Great War in 1914	Tony Winnett			Not used
Added during the year				
Additional Exercise unit	Val Hughes		2600	Ordered
Outdoor concert	Ian Holme		2000	Completed

- c. Budgets for 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 were included in the hand-out, and Clerk talked the meeting through the figures and answered all questions which arose.
- d. The current bank balances and the financial status forwarded projected to 31th March 2017 were provided to the meeting. The final projection is as follows:

Barclays Bank Deposit Account		55784
Barclays Bank Current Account		5314
Santander Bond		20000
Total at bank		81098
Ring fenced funds		
Burial Fund	2687	
Flood Contingency Reserve	6000	8687
Funds in hand as at today		<u>72411</u>

7. Litter Picker

The council has been led to believe that as part of their cut-backs, it is unlikely the Litter Picker costs will be refunded by the Borough Council. The current cost is circa £3,800 per annum.

The meeting decided that the service is valuable to the upkeep of the villages, and therefore will be required in 2015 and 2016. Peter Foster proposed and Chris Pratt Seconded a motion that the Parish Council will wish to continue to employ the Litter Picker. The meeting agreed to take over the payment of the Litter Picker, in the event that DBC relinquish this commitment. The motion was passed unanimously.

Peter Foster suggested that the Litter Picker's scope be extended to include a regular tidy up of Hurworth Grange, as this is an important showpiece of the Parish. It was recommended that three hours a week should be committed to this, which would cost circa £1000 per annum. It was thought that HCA should meet half this cost, and based on the assumption that HCA agree, this was agreed. **Action: Clerk to make the arrangements.**

8. Election

DBC has informed the council that we will be charged with half of the election expenses in May 2015, and if, as appears possible, a second election is required in May 2016, then the parish council will be charged the full cost. The figures have been included in the budgets:-

2015 £2400

2016 £4800

9. Projects for 2015-16

a. The Chairman listed the following expenditure, which should be considered and included in the budgets:-

- Cost of the public meeting £500
- Increased cost of CDALC membership £300
- Hogweed commitment at least £2000 each year
- A donation, this year of £150 to the Darlington Association of Parish Councils – The meeting agreed to this expenditure and instructed the Clerk to make the payment.
- A contingency Plan contribution to be ring-fenced.
- Application for Quality Parish Council Gold status cost £200.
- First Aid course to be organised in March 2015 – allocated £500
- Cost of paying a person to handle the data collection from the speed monitors £500.

b. Peter Foster proposed that the council should contribute £2000 each year to both the Hurworth Country Fair, and also to the Annual Outdoor Concert. These fall within the council's remit to support Leisure activities

which benefit a large number of residents. This was Seconded by Chris Pratt, and carried unanimously.

- c. Val Hughes proposed the creation of two disabled mobility pathways. One from Rockliffe Court to Blind Lane, and a second from the Glebe to Hurworth grange. These were well received and discussed in some detail, as there are a number of issues to be addressed. The meeting agreed to allocate £3000 to this project. Val Hughes will lead this project, with help from Chris Pratt.

10. Precept for 2015

When the council set the Precept for the current year, it made a provision of 3,500 specifically to combat the influx of Freedom of Information enquiries, believing that we would incur legal costs. It was also declared that if this expenses was not incurred, then the Precept for 2015, would be reduced. These legal costs were not incurred and therefore this amount must be added back when establishing the 2015 Precept.

The Chairman summarised the financial situation, stressing that it is assumed that the parish will have to pay for the Litter Picker, currently £3800, and it is known that we must meet future election costs, in 2015 this will be £2400. After crediting back the none-spent legal costs of £3,500, this leaves a shortfall of £2,700

Whereas the council do not wish to pass this burden onto the residents, some contribution will be required to ensure the effective operations of the Parish Council.

After discussion, the council agreed that a **modest increase of 2.5 percent** should be put forward for next year. This is similar to DBC's rate increase of 1.99 percent.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8:40pm