

Finance and General Purposes Committee

Annual Report 2021/22

The purpose of this committee is to ensure that the conduct, finances, management and administration of the Parish Council is properly and effectively carried out.

The main duties of the committee relate to: -

- 1) To consider and recommend to the Parish Council matters relating to: -
 - Committees' terms of reference and delegated powers
 - Amendments to Standing Orders
 - Various policies and procedures
 - Budget and Precept
 - Tenders and quotations
 - Provision of facilities or services not covered by other Committees
 - Risk Management and Insurance
 - Remuneration and other matters concerning the Clerk and employees
 - Grants and donations
 - Parish Trusts
- 2) Financial management and control
- 3) Administration of the Parish Room and Office

The committee met four times during year and as well as focussing on the above responsibilities they have also undertaken: -

a) The Council's policies, procedures, standing orders and financial regulations were reviewed when needed and updated as necessary by any changes in legislation and recommended good practice.

b) Drafting of the annual budget for the Council and recommending the precept (the amount to be received from Council Tax) needed for 2022/23. In doing this it considered the expected expenditure needed for the Council to carry out its activities and the many risks that the Council's finances may face in the future. It also assessed what earmarked reserves, i.e., for specific projects or activities, were needed and that its general reserves would be adequate. Following the committee's recommendations, the Council set the total budget for 2022/23 at £161,937 and the precept at £152,250, this represented an increase of 5% on the 2021/22 council tax bill.

c) As part of its risk management and planning for the future Earmarked Reserves are set to fund particular matters that are expected to arise, and the total agreed for 2022/23 for this committee is £122,798.

d) Each year local organisations are invited to apply to the Council for a grant; the committee considers all application and the grants decided to be awarded in 2022/23 were: -

- Greenways Countryside Project: £1000.00
- Martlesham Conservation Group: £138.32
- Martlesham in Bloom: £190.00
- The Saplings: £638.56
- Disability Advice Service (East Suffolk): £500.00
- Suffolk Accident Rescue Service: £350.00
- Total £2816.88**

Subsequently grants were agreed by the Parish Council for: -

- Headway: £400
- Ipswich Citizen's Advice Bureau: £400.

e) The Covid19 pandemic and consequent restrictions and regulations meant that the Council and its committees have adapted with staff working both from home and in the office, on a rota basis and meetings held remotely on Zoom at the beginning of the year. However, since the beginning of June meetings have been held in St Michaels Church Centre (to accommodate the current pandemic restrictions and good practice), which has incurred extra expenditure, and more recently a number of smaller meetings have been able to be held in the Parish Room.

f) The Committee received a Green Audit report on The Parish Room/Richards Room, which was considered, along with the chairman of the Martlesham Community Hall Management Committee. Recommendations were made to the Parish Council to undertake roof insulation in the building, upgrade the Parish Room and office lights to LED lighting and investigate cavity wall insulation, these were all considered financially viable short-term gains. It was also recommended that the Martlesham Climate Action prepares a business/ green case for installing solar panels on the roof as part of a long-term aim.

g) External audit arrangements remained as previous years which means there will be the usual tight timetable to finalise the accounts.

During the year, in September, there was a major change in the staffing arrangements affecting this committee with Diane Linsley taking over as Clerk and Susan Robertson taking flexible retirement and being appointed as Finance Officer. The Finance Officer is now responsible for supporting this committee and I am grateful as we continue to benefit from her experience.

The last year has continued to be difficult to manage within the various pandemic regulations and uncertainties and I would particularly like to thank the Clerk, the Finance Officer, the Council Officer and the Administrative Assistant for their dedicated work ensuring that the Council and its committees had the necessary information and documents available to enable the committees to continue to carry out their work.

The committee comprises Mike Williamson, Mike Irwin, Ian O'Brien Baker and David Boswell and I would like to conclude by thanking them for their work over the year.

Laurence Burrows, Chairman – Finance and General Purposes Committee,
April 2022