**MOLLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**DRAFT BUDGET V1 2024-25**

**SUMMARY**

**The table below sets out the Budget for 2023-24, Projected Outturn 2023-24, variance and a Draft Budget for 2024-25.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ref** |  | **Budget** **2023-24** | **Projected** **Outturn 2023-24** | **Variance** | **Draft Budget****2024-25** |
|  |  | **£** | **£** | **£** | **£** |
| **1** | **Clerk’s Salary (Net)**  | **6511.00** | **3398.53** | **-3112.47** | **2531.00** |
| **2** | **Amenity Cleaner (Net)**  | **-** | **2182.83** | **2182.83** | **1428.00** |
|  | **Income Tax** | **-** | **2074.74** | **2074.74** | **990.00** |
| **3** | **Gardener (S137)** | **750.00** | **600** | **-150.00** | **600.00** |
| **4** | **Clerk’s Monthly Allowance** | **120.00** | **40.00** | **-80.00** | **120.00** |
| **5** | **Travel Expenses** | **20.00** | **40.50** | **20.50** | **110.00** |
| **6** | **Barnes Cooper Payroll Service** | **-** | **40.00** | **40.00** | **144.00** |
| **7** | **Insurance** | **400.00** | **312.40** | **-87.60** | **350.00** |
| **8** | **Subscriptions CHALC / SLCC** | **350.00** | **305.56** | **-44.44** | **320.00** |
| **9** | **Information Commissioner** | **35.00** | **35.00** | **0** | **40.00** |
| **10** | **Room Hire (school)** | **140.00** | **140.00** | **0** | **140.00** |
| **11** | **St Oswald’s Field Licence (S137)** | **300.00** | **300.00** | **0** | **300.00** |
| **12** | **Audit Fee** | **125.00** | **180.00** | **55.00** | **180.00** |
| **13** | **Allowance for Training** | **240.00** | **0** | **240.00** | **105.00** |
| **14** | **Administrative Costs** | **65.00** | **52.99** | **-12.01** | **150.00** |
| **15** | **Newsletter** | **-** | **150.00** | **150.00** | **250.00** |
| **16** | **Lea-By-Backford Essar Marshalls**  | **50.00** | **50.00** | **0** | **50.00** |
| **17** | **Website Hosting & Domain** | **275.00** | **596.26** | **321.26** | **250.00** |
| **18** | **Community Projects (S137)** | **2000.00** | **0** | **-2000.00** | **3000.00** |
| **19** | **Grove Road Speed Reduction** | **-** | **390.00** | **390.00** | **0** |
| **20** | **Overwood & Townfield Lane Speed Reduction** | **0** | **1000.00** | **1000.00** | **0** |
| **21** | **Keys School Field (S137)** | **0** | **20.00** | **20.00** | **0** |
| **22** | **Coronation Celebrations** | **2000.00** | **662.32** | **-1337.68** | **0** |
| **23** | **Remembrance Wreath** | **30.00** | **31.48** | **1.48** | **35.00** |
| **24** | **PWLB Village Hall Loan** | **2235.00** | **2234.70** | **-0.30** | **2235.00** |
| **25** | **Cost of Elections** | **548.00** | **181.00** | **-367.00** | **0** |
| **26** | **Unity Trust Bank Charges** | **72.00** | **72.00** | **0** | **72.00** |
| **27** | **Contingency** | **500.00** | **0** | **-500.00** | **600.00** |
| **28** | **VAT** | **300.00** | **300.00** | **0** | **0** |
|  | **TOTALS** | **17066.00** | **15390.31** | **-1675.69** | **14000.00** |

**NOTES**:

**1** **Clerk’s Salary:**

 The Clerk’s salary should be reviewed annually and recorded in the Minutes. The salary calculation is based on the following formula:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Agreed number of hours to be paid per week | x | NALC/SLCC agreed hourly rates (notified by the Cheshire Association of Local Councils) | x 52 |

 This calculation is based on a National Agreement which was put in place in early 2005 which allows councils to base salaries on an assessment of the work that is being carried out on its behalf. The Clerk also acts as Responsible Financial Officer.

 Following its meeting on **23rd November 2023 (Minute Ref: 23/101**), the Parish Council agreed that the Clerk would be paid on SCP 18 at 4 hours per week and paid in line with the National Agreement at **£15.21 per hour**. **Therefore: 4hours x £15.21 x 52 = £3163.68**

 **Note:** the Parish Clerk is paid by Standing Order 30th monthly.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Annual Gross** | **Annual Tax** | **Annual Net** | **Monthly Gross** | **Monthly Tax** | **Monthly Net** |
| **3163.68** | **632.74** | **2530.94** | **263.64** | **52.72** | **210.92** |

**2** **Amenity Cleaner**

Following its meeting on 21st March 2023 (Minute Ref: 23/018 (2)), the Parish Council agreed that the Amenity Cleaner would be paid in accordance with the real living wage. From 1 April 2024 the rate has been increased to **£11.44 per hour**. Also, on 25th September 2023 the Amenity Cleaner requested a reduction in hours from 6 per week to **3 per week** with effect from 1 October 2023. **Therefore: 3hours x £11.44 x 52 = £1784.64.**

 **Note:** the Amenity Cleaner is paid by Standing Order 28th monthly.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Annual Gross** | **Annual Tax** | **Annual Net** | **Monthly Gross** | **Monthly Tax** | **Monthly Net** |
| **1784.64** | **356.92** | **1427.72** | **148.72** | **29.74** | **118.97** |

**3 Gardener: Grasshopper Landscapes**

Following its meeting on 19th September 2023 (Minute Ref: 23/085), the Parish Council agreed that John MacDonald would be paid at the rate **£15.00 per hour** and work **4 hours per month.** It was also agreed that the gardener would work monthly April to September and then November, January and December = 9 months in total.

 **Therefore: 4hours per month x £15 x 9 = £540. It is PROPOSED to set the budget at £600 which allows for an additional 4 hours per year.**

 **NOTE:** the gardener is paid by Direct Debit on presentation of an invoice duly ratified by Councillor Roger Jones.

### **4 Clerk’s Monthly Allowance**

 In accordance with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) guidance, the Clerk’s Contract (para 8.3) makes provision for the payment of an allowance of £10 per month (paid every two months) to cover working from home. It is **PROPOSED** that the budget remains the same in 2024-25 at **£120.00.**

## **5** **Travelling Expenses**

 In accordance with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) guidance, the Clerk’s Contract (para 7) makes provision for the payment of mileage and subsistence paid at the agreed National Joint Council (NJC) rate which is currently set at **0.45p per mile**. It is **PROPOSED** that the sum is increased to **£110.00** in 2024-25 to reflect that the Parish Clerk’s home to work mileage is greater than the previous Clerk’s. As a minimum there will be six Full Parish Council meetings (£13.50 per return) and additional 2 return trips have been added.

**6 Barnes Cooper Payroll Service**

At its meeting on Thursday 23rd November 2023 (Minute Ref: 23/102 (v)) the Parish Council agreed to engage Barnes Cooper to process the Council’s payroll. The cost of the service will be charged at £10.00 per month or £120 per annum plus VAT. It is **PROPOSED** to set the budget at **£144.00** for 2024-25.

**7 Insurance**

 The Parish Council’s Insurance Policy runs out on 1 June 2024. The Council’s Insurance Broker Came and Company will provide a renewal notice and quotations for the Council’s consideration in May. At this point the Parish Council can undertake a detailed review of the cover including obtaining quotes from other providers. In the meantime, it is **PROPOSED** to set the budget at **£350.00** for 2024-25.

**8** **Subscriptions**

 At the time of the meeting Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC) and Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) have not yet decided whether to increase their 2024-25 subscriptions. As the actual subscriptions are linked to population there may be a slight increase. It is **PROPOSED** to set the CHALC budget at **£240.00** and the SLCC budget at **£80.00** for 2024-25 at total of **£320** per annum.

**9 Information Commissioner**

 The £35.00 fee has remained the same for a number of years. However, the Information Commissioner has not yet decided whether to increase the 2024-25 subscriptions. It is **PROPOSED** to set the budget at **£40.00** for 2024-25.

**10** **Room Hire: St Oswald’s Primary School**

 At the time of the meeting it is not known whether there will be an increase in fees. It is **PROPOSED** to hold the 2024-25 budget at **£140.00** which allows for the six planned Parish Council meetings plus an aadditional meeting i.e. 7 meetings @ £20.00 = **£140.00.**

**11** **St Oswald’s School Field Licence**

At the time of the meeting, it is not known whether the 2024-25 licence fee will be increased. It is **PROPOSED** to hold the budget at **£300** for 2024-25.

**12 Audit Fees**

 **External Audit:** Guidance and advice confirms that the Parish Council meets the criteria and has the right to certify that it is exempt from an external audit i.e. that income or expenditure does not exceed £25,000. As such there will be no fee and the Parish Council does not need to set a budget.

**Internal Audit:** The Internal Audit is undertaken by David Cooper of Barnes Cooper. Given the disruption brought about by the staffing changes in 2023-24, it is **PROPOSED** to increase the budget to **£180.00** which is the cost of a detailed audit should this be needed in 2024-25.

**13** **Training**

 Traditionally, the Council has relied on briefings and ‘free’ workshops hosted by CWAC and CHALC. Costs for formal training, typically all delivered virtually, range from £25 to £35 per Councillor per session. It is **PROPOSED** to set a budget of **£105.00** which would cover three sessions.

**14** **Administrative Costs**

As on-line and electronic working has evolved, postage and stationery costs have reduced. However, the cost of printer toner has increased. Costs are dependent on the new Parish Clerk’s “way of working” which will become clearer as she settles into post. In the meantime, it is **PROPOSED** to set a budget of **£150.00** for 2024-25.

**15** **Newsletter**

The Parish Council will need to decide how many Newsletters it intends to publish during the year so that the cost of printing and distribution can be estimated. An **ESTIMATE** of **£250.00** has been included for **2024-25 for three newsletters at approximately £80 each.** However,this may fall short of the total cost and the balance would need to be subsidised from the contingency or reserves.

**16** **Lea-By-Backford, Essar Half Marathon**

The Essar Half Marathon is an annual event organised by Active Leisure. In return for Mollington and Lea-By-Backford providing Marshalls, Active Leisure makes a contribution of £250.00 which is paid into the Mollington Parish Council bank account. It is **PROPOSED** to set a budget of **£50.00** for 2024-25 which reflects the payment to Lea-By-Backford of their share.

**17 Website**

Hadfield Photography provides IT and website support and administers the renewal fee for the domain. At the time of the meeting, it is not known whether the 2024-25 fee will be increased. It is **PROPOSED** to set the budget at **£250.00** for 2024-25.

 **Note:** Historically the Parish Council has “covered” the costs of the Five Villages Website (£202.00 2023-24) which is offset by a contribution from the Ward Councillor. Therefore no Parish Council budget is required.

**18** **Section 137**: **Community Projects**

 Under S137 of the LGA 1972, the Parish Council has the discretionary power to “promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well being of the area”. It can be used for: donations to charity which provide benefits to residents; grants to local clubs i.e. youth clubs, senior citizens clubs or other community groups offering beneficial services / activities; awards and prizes for local competitions to encourage community spirit or environmental awareness. The power is limited to an amount per elector (approx 549 April 2023) and increases each year in line with the RPI. For 2023-24 the amount was capped at £9.93. The Parish Council could therefore set a budget up to a maximum of: 549 x £9.93 = £5,451. It is **PROPOSED** to set a budget of **£3000** for 2024-25.

 **NOTES:**

1. The Parish Council will need to decide how it wishes to apply this budget. For example: a questionnaire setting out the budget, criteria and asking residents to submit ideas / proposals may give Councillors some direction to ensure the budget is applied in accordance with residents’ wishes.

2**.** Together with Item 27 Contingency, this budget acts as a balancing item.

3**.** Councillors are reminded that at the time of this report, the Eden House monies of **£3605.10** remains unspent.

**19, 20, 21, 22 & 25: Grove Road Speed Reduction; Overwood & Townfield Lane Speed Reduction, Keys School Field, Coronation Costs and Election Costs.**

These costs are one off for 2023-24 only and therefore no budget is needed for 2024-25.

 **NOTE:** The speed reductions for Overwood Lane and Townfield Lane are planned for completion in 2023-24 and have been accounted for. If the work is not done, then the projected underspend and balance in reserve will increase and the funds set aside, carried forward.

**23 Remembrance Wreath**

 Each year the Parish Council purchases a poppy wreath which is laid at St Oswald’s Church, Backford on Remembrance Sunday. It is **PRPOSED** to set the budget at **£35.00** for 2024-25.

**24** **Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) Loan Repayment Village Hall**

 At the meeting on 26th April 2019 (Minute Ref: 19/31) it was resolved to seek approval from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and local Government to apply for a PWLB loan of £30,500 to fund a shortfall in monies to build the new Five Villages Hall, to be repaid over 15 years. Following approval, annual repayments amount to £2235 which are made in two instalments. It is **PROPOSED** to set a budget of **£2235.00** for 2024-25.

 **NOTE:** As at 31 March 2023 the balance outstanding was £26,982.73

**26 Unity Trust Bank Charges**

It is **PROPOSED** to hold the budget at the same level of **£72.00 (i.e. £6.00 per month)** for 2024-25.

1. **Contingency Item**

 Together with Item 18, S137 Community Projects, this budget acts as a balancing item to enable the precept to be held at the same level as last year. It is **PROPOSED** to set a budget of **£600.00.**

**28 Balances**

 The projected closing balance and reserves at **31st March 2024** is **£10,559.83** which includes theCommunity Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies of **£3,605.10** from the sale of Eden House (ring fenced for community projects). When adjusted for the CIL, the revised projected reserves are **£6,954.73.** The Audit Commission advises that balances at year end should be between 3 months and a year’s operating costs. The projected reserves at March 2025 would cover approximately six months of the full year costs.

1. **Sources of Income**

 The only income the Parish Council can rely on is the precept.

1. **PRECEPT**

The majority of the Parish Council’s annual budget is raised through the Precept. This is an amount paid by each household in the parish, through their Council Tax payment, which is determined by the Parish Council. The Precept income is often supplemented through grants.

In December each year, the Parish Council begins the process of forward planning in preparation for setting a work plan, budget and Precept for the following Council year, which runs from April to March. Councillors suggest and debate potential new projects, services or activities and discuss and debate whether to revise aspects of the Parish Council’s work.

The Precept (that amount of the Council Tax which is collected on behalf of the Parish Council by Cheshire West and Chester Council) is determined by the budget required. Following further refinement and adjustments, the following final draft Budget is presented at the January Parish Council meeting.

In 2023/24, Mollington Parish Council requested a precept of £14,000.00 therefore costing each household £38.46. For 2024-2025 (with a Local Tax Base of 374.2) it is proposed that the Precept request also be in the sum of £14,000.00 thus costing each household £37.41. In monetary terms, this represents a decrease per household of £1.05.

**CONCLUSION:**

**Setting a Budget of £14,000 would result in a reduction per Band D to £37.41.**

**RECOMMENDED**

**That the Parish Council:**

1. **Note the report**
2. **Agree the 2024-25 Budget at £14,000**
3. **Agree the Precept for 2024-25 at £37.41 per Band D property.**

**Pat Wells**

**Acting Parish Clerk**

**Mollington Parish Council**

**5 December 2023**