

Committee, Group or Sub Group	
FINANCE & STRATEGY GROUP	
Meeting Date & Venue	
2.30pm Wednesday 20 th October 2021, Virtual ZOOM Meeting	
Report Author	
Deborah Jenkins – Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer	
Report	
<p>Present: Parish Councillors Paddy Riordan (PR), Colin Bowden (CB), Joan Buller (JB), Eric Hotson (EH), John Perry – arrived at the point indicated in the notes (JP), Richard Smith (RS). Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer Deborah Jenkins (DJ), Clerk Alison Smith (AS).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Apologies: Councillor Sam Lain-Rose. Dispensations: Cllr Hotson being a trustee of Staplehurst Community Centre and Chairman of Junior Monarchs Football Club and Cllr Riordan being a trustee of Staplehurst Community Centre. Minutes of last meeting (21/07/2021): it was NOTED that they had previously been issued to Full Council and published on the PC website. Draft Budget 2022-2023 – Review of initial draft: Councillors reviewed the first draft of the budget as presented by the Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer. It was AGREED that the sums requested by the Communications Group (Village Update & Website budget) and the Greener Staplehurst Group (Wimpey Field budget), included in the first draft, should remain as is and to include in the next draft an increase of £1,500 for CCTV at Jubilee Field; an increase of £2,500 for a review of the Neighbourhood Plan; an additional sum of £1,000 for a second Skatepark event; to review the staff budget line to include an increase of 3-4% due to the expected rise in inflation along with an additional budget for agreed overtime to deliver some key time consuming projects; and to include a further sum of £1,000 for Professional Fees relating to Jubilee Field. Councillors AGREED to the proposed increase of £10,000 for the Projects budget towards Surrenden Field outdoor gym equipment and a replacement pavilion to be partly funded from CIL/S106 monies. A second draft of the budget would be produced by DJ and distributed to Councillors. PR mentioned that a music concert may take place at Jubilee Field in 2022 and the Parish Council could possibly be asked for financial support. It was AGREED that further information was required before a donation could be included in the budget. PR is to gather more information for the next F&SG meeting. <i>Councillor John Perry arrived at the meeting during the above discussion.</i> EH noted that as the draft budget encompassed a greater increase in spending SPC should approach our KCC Member for a grant to assist with expenditure; the proposed road traffic survey, for example. PR AGREED to email KCC Cllr Parfitt-Reid to ask for her assistance. <p><u>ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Jubilee Playing Field – Update on the appointment of new trustees: AS reported that she had not yet had the time to begin work on progressing the JFMC trustees and the relationship between JFMC and the Parish Council. Following a suggestion by JB it was <u>AGREED that at the next Full Council meeting a sum should be approved to pay the Clerk for any hours incurred, outside of her normal hours, to complete the work relating to the appointment of trustees and the JFMC relationship with SPC.</u> PR updated Councillors in relation to the Football Stadium Improvement Fund for a 3G pitch at Jubilee Field and stated that Parish Council approval would be required before any further progress could be made. Councillors were in agreement that if Parish Council support were to be given the use of the pitch needed to be all inclusive for sports other than just for football. PR requested that the Clerk prepare a note for Council for the next meeting to obtain agreement in principle to the provision of a 3G pitch to be developed. Staplehurst Youth Club – Update on Youth Club re-opening: JP reported that he had spoken with Paul Kelly who had intimated that he did not want to be involved with the Youth Club in the future. The Youth Club is currently still closed. JP is to ask PK for a definitive answer on this 	

matter. The Deputy Clerk informed Councillors that the Youth Club no longer had a bank account. A question was raised as to what would have happened to any funds that belonged to the Youth Club. EH stated that KCC have an obligation to provide youth provision and have Youth Workers available to help. It was AGREED to progress youth provision in Staplehurst after JP had spoken with PK about his intentions for the Youth Club.

OTHER BUSINESS

7. **Engaging the public in budget consultations** – whether or not to use the Village Update, or other platforms, as a means of reaching the public. For recommendation: There was much discussion by Councillors relating to this item and the initial view generally was that this could lead into a minefield. The Clerk believed that the Council should be engaging with the public and suggested that a more targeted approach could be used, relating to specific projects. RS suggested that the Communications Group should look at ways of engaging the public in decision making. DJ suggested that engagement with the public could lead to a long-term strategic planning approach to the Council's budgeting process. Councillors AGREED to revisit this item in the future.
8. **CIL** – Schedule of funds received/available; forward strategy on the use of funds; engaging the community in the decision-making process - DJ informed Councillors that no further funds had been received since the previous meeting. The schedule was NOTED.
9. **Quotation for Recommendation to Full Council** - Annual Tree Inspection: cost of survey. It was AGREED to recommend to Full Council that GRS Arboricultural Consultant carry out a walk over condition survey of all trees on land owned by the Parish Council at a cost of £300.00
10. **Next Quarter Contract Reviews & Payments to be made** - A schedule of forthcoming contracts and subscriptions for renewal had been circulated to all Councillors. It was AGREED to recommend to Full Council the renewal of the annual contracts with Countrystyle Group re waste collection £702.00 p.a., Staplehurst Community Centre re lease of parish offices £4,680 p.a., Playplace Ltd re summer play scheme £2,250.00, Staplehurst PCC re donation towards Churchyard maintenance £7,644.00 p.a., Staplehurst Community Centre re Meeting Hall hire £1,147.50 p.a., Paxman Services Ltd re Bell Lane Toilet unlocking £1,037.40 p.a., Cleaning/opening £6,331.00 p.a. and Paxman Printing re the Village Update and Annual Report £1,955.80 p.a.
AS raised concerns expressed by GSG about the disposal of green vegetation waste. DJ is to investigate the cost of a waste disposal bin for green waste.
11. **Other Business** – AS reported that she had received the draft lease from MBC for the disabled toilet block and that MBC had requested the name of the Parish Council's solicitor. EH suggested that a solicitor wouldn't be required to review this particular lease as the original lease was with MBC and SPC had been added as a third party, until the existing lease between KCC and MBC expired. EH AGREED to review the lease agreement. AS had also received the draft licence from MBC for the replacement gate and installation of grasscrete at the vehicle entrance to Surrenden Field and the installation of the SCEG bench, for which MBC had also requested SPC's solicitors name. EH stated that the Parish Council had used the services of Buss Merton in Cranbrook in the past.
12. **Date of Next Meeting** – 1st December 2021, 2.30pm by virtual ZOOM.

