

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

FINANCE GROUP

PARISH OFFICE 6 OCTOBER 2011

The minutes of the latest Finance Group meeting have been distributed to Councillors. The minutes contain a number of recommendations which the Council is asked to support. However, the main purpose of this meeting was to review the Precept calculation for 2012/13.

The position is not straightforward as there are still some unknowns, not the least being the level of concurrent functions grant to be made available by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC). Nevertheless initial calculations point to a further significant increase. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the General Reserve has been used to fund the street sweeping and will further reduce this year to fund the PoleCat cameras. Second, the budget for 2012/13 includes an additional £10,000 for a Village Centre Development Fund. Third, the maintenance of the toilets allows for the reopening of the disabled toilet and increased maintenance costs. These changes are summarised below:

| | £ |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| Parish Precept 2011/12 | 82, 500 |
| Add: PoleCat cameras to reserve | £11, 200 |
| Village Centre Fund | £10, 000 |
| Street Cleaning | £8,800 |
| Public Toilets | £3,100 |
| Increase in Parish Precept | 33, 100 |
| Parish Precept for 2012/13 | 115, 600 |
| % Increase over 2011/12 | 40.12% |

There are a number of issues that need to be considered. These are set out below:

1. The percentage increase appears high but in reality is probably less than 29 pence per week for a Band D property.
2. The General Reserve will reduce to a little over £3,000. The Council will need to consider how much it should be increased. Ideally it should be at least £25,000.
3. Should we be creating a fund for the development of the Village Centre.
4. The level of the Concurrent Functions Grant is not known but is likely to reduce.

Clearly Staplehurst Parish Council is providing additional services for the benefit of the community and is acting as a proactive Council in the manner that the Council agreed. Nevertheless, with the reduction in reserves, and an increase in the services provided coupled with a reduction in the Concurrent Functions Grant, means that we shall have little option to increase the Precept; but, it is the level of that increase that we shall need to consider carefully.

John Perry

October 2011