



Cllr Christopher Arnold
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DRAFT MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING TUESDAY 1ST FEBRUARY 2022

For approval by Council on 11th April 2022

**Those attending: Cllrs Mead (Chairman), Arnold, Baker, Ewing, Taverner, Williams.
No members of the public were present.**

1. Introduction

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting which he reminded them had been called solely to review the Council's financial position and to agree its budget and precept for 2022-23. He had called the extra meeting to enable the precept requirement to be notified to Colchester Borough Council (CBC) before that organisation's deadline – this would not have been possible if the decisions required to be made had been offered to the next scheduled GHPC meeting. He thanked Cllrs Arnold and Baker for the preparation of the financial projection and commentary which had been distributed with the Agenda, which he knew had taken a great deal of time. Cllr Arnold remarked that Cllr Baker was particularly to be thanked, having taken on the considerable task of posting onto the accounts software all of the transactions that had occurred since 30th September and resolving anomalies in previous postings. Without this work it would not have been possible to produce reliable projections of the Council's 2022-23 income and expenditure.

2. Apologies and reasons for absence

Cllrs Duckworth and Wescomb-Cross had notified that they would not be able to attend the meeting. On the advice of the Chairman, it was agreed that the absences were unavoidable and should not count against their record of attendance.

3. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Baker declared an interest in respect of the Churchyard grant.
Cllr Mead declared an interest in respect of the support given to the Village News.

4. Grants to village organisations

Requests for financial support had been received from five organisations:

All Saints' with Saint John's PCC re churchyard maintenance	£700
1 st Great Horkesley Guides re bulky equipment storage	£900
The Friendship Club re transport costs	£200
Dedham Vale and Stour Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee	£100
Bishop William Ward School Parents' Association re shed purchase	£900

Cllr Mead advised that the Friendship Club was now being disbanded and would not require their grant. Following discussion it was agreed that the BWWS Parent's Association should be awarded half of the sum requested in the expectation that the other half could then be secured from other organisations. The other requests would be met in full.

It was agreed to include £2150 in the 2022-23 budget for grants to village organisations.

5. **New item: Neighbourhood Planning**

Cllr Arnold, the Council's representative on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, reported that the Group's leader had estimated the cost of preparing the Plan was likely to be well in excess of £5000, though it should be possible to obtain grants from other organisations to bring down the overall cost to the village. **It was agreed** that £5000 be included in the 2022-23 budget for neighbourhood planning, though with the expectation that some would be spent in later years. Ordinarily the Council would pay the Group's bills rather than releasing the funds to the Group.

6. **Detailed consideration of the budget proposal**

Members discussed the budget analysis provided with the agenda item by item. Cllr Baker provided insight and fielded questions on the basis of what he had learned from working on the accounting system. There were two significant items which could not be estimated with confidence: the cost of employing a new clerk and the income from the village hall. In previous years the Council had aimed to set charges for the hall at a level that balanced its income with expenditure but how the income would recover following lockdown was simply unknown. It was agreed that this would be the aim for 2022-23 and that the Council's balances were sufficient to meet any likely expenditure if income fell short. The new clerk would be expected to work fewer hours because much of the village hall booking work had been transferred to the Hall Manager – her hours and rate of pay would need to be increased as a result. It was not known when a new caretaker might be appointed for the hall.

It was agreed that following various amendments to the budget analysis provided with the agenda, the Council should budget to spend £73253.30 against income of £29,583.00. This would leave a budget gap to be closed by precept or from balances of £43,664.30.

7. **Precept**

The Council had been notified by CBC that for 2022-23 for every £1 precept levied at Band D, GHPC could expect to raise £1047.80. It followed that if GHPC relied on precept alone to close the budget gap, it would have to be increased by 15.4% from £36.11 to £41.67. Members were unanimous that this was unacceptable.

Following discussion **it was agreed** that £3000 would be transferred from balances to support the 2022-23 budget. This would bring the increase over the 2021-22 precept down to 7.47%. The resulting precept would be £38.81 at Band D, an increase of just 22½ pence per month.

It was agreed to notify Colchester Borough Council that the Band D precept to be levied within Great Horkeley parish for 2022-23 should be £38.81.

The tables and commentary provided to members with the agenda for this meeting form part of the minutes and will be kept as such. However, Great Horkeley Parish Council is a small organisation so it is possible to learn from those documents how much the Council pays individual staff. Those documents are therefore considered to be confidential and will not be published.