Batheaston Parish Council – Council Meeting 16th January 2024
Budget and Precept 2024-25 Setting: Supporting Commentary

Introduction
This document provides explanatory notes for the spreadsheet provided for Council.

The Finance Committee was re-established at the November Council meeting, and has held two meetings since then, to establish the basis for the analysis in the spreadsheet. In particular this includes the areas of focus for cost saving. The Committee will continue to seek opportunities to reduce costs and provide better value from the Councils funds.

Structure of the Spreadsheet

The spreadsheet includes a relatively high-level summary of the income and spend items of the Council. A greater level of granularity might yield more precision, and this is the objective as the financial management – and the use of the finance system – improves.

The summary page includes:

- The 2023/24 figures, for the Precept and the cost that this represents for a Band D household.
- The options that are available for Council in setting the Precept:
    - Inflation Assumption, set to 3% on the advice of Finance Committee
    - Savings Assumption for identified focus areas, see below
    - Community Grant Fund, the fund to be set aside for grants to be made to community projects and services
    - Surplus Required for Projects, a fund to initiate and support the projects that the Council wishes to undertake.

The projection forward is structured as follows:

Income
- Excluding the Precept, and the exceptional grant funding received in 2023/24; the projection assumes other items are in line with inflation.

Expenditure
- Spend Items subject to areas where possible savings were identified by Finance Committee (see "2023-12-04 11 Review of Major Categories of Expenditure" in the Finance Committee meeting folder).
    - Salaries and on-costs (tax, NI and pensions)
    - Utilities (4 electricity contracts and 2 water services)
    - Grounds Maintenance (principally grass cutting, weed control)
    - IT and related services (council email service and document management, web services, etc)
- Other operational expenditure, which are inflated according to the figure decided by Council, as above.
    - The Rhymes Pavilion is expected to remain open, with some improvement in its net cost to the Council.
- The fund for Community Grants:
    - individual decisions are made for each grant application,

        - a review and update of the process for awarding grants is to be undertaken, which will include the setting of a total fund
    - The surplus required for projects:
- The identified projects are:
    - The Playground
    - Rhymes Pavilion
    - Riverside and Car Park
    - All-weather Court, Skate Ramp and Basketball Hoop
- The assumption is that all of the major projects will seek and obtain the greater part of the funds required from other sources (Government grants; charitable and other sources; community fund-raising, etc). Nevertheless, some investment is expected to come from the Council to initiate projects, and to provide match-funding, etc.
- It is assumed for these purposes that the Batheaston Times will cover its costs, as it continues to secure sponsors.

At the bottom of this table are the figures for the Council's reserves at the end of 3rd Quarter (£80,849) and as projected for the end of the financial year (£54,970). These are used as the basis for the calculation of the **Precept required:**

- Precept Required for 2024/25 to maintain reserve @ 6 months' precept

The final section of the summary sheet shows the change to the Precept, as a percentage change from the current year, and the Band D cost for the year.

Richard Maccabee,
Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer
16th January 2024