

# **Batheaston Parish Council**

## **Report from the Finance Committee chair, Catherine Gregory.**

- 1. A public meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Zoom on the 20<sup>th</sup> October.**
- 2.** The meeting was attended by Catherine Gregory, Patrick Vandesteen, Matt Tovey and the RFO, Richard Maccabee. Apologies were received from Alexis Pavlou and Andrew Lea. Paula Day has resigned from the council and Finance Committee.
- 3.** The Minutes of the 2 previous meetings (18<sup>th</sup> August and 22<sup>nd</sup> September) were approved
- 4. Community Matters**
  - 4.1.** Cllr Gregory reported on proposals to register land owned by the Parish Council.
- 5. Matters of Financial Administration for Approval**
  - 5.1.** The monthly transactions totalling £4718 and bank reconciliation for September 2020 were approved. The high monthly transactions were due to payment of both August (which were late) and September salaries (salary total £3925 in September)
- 6. Half-year Budget Review 2020/21**
  - 6.1.** Cllr Gregory reported on the status of Council finances as at the end of September, and the implications for the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the FY. The council is about on track to the budget approved in March 2020. There have been variances in income and expenditure but these largely balance out. The half year review forecasts the budget can be balanced but there is almost no margin in this forecast and there remains uncertainty as to how much grant will be paid to the Youth Club due to continuing restrictions. Note, the Clerk continues to discover financial commitments that were not budgeted for. This does highlight a risk to the forecast. It is essential clear time is made to complete the VAT claim (£9,500), without this there will be a significant deficit on the year. It is important to understand the funds available for discretionary spend are very limited, around £500.
- 7. Procedural Items**
  - 7.1.** The committee resolved to submit the standard SLCC/NALC Financial Regulations with agreed limits to full Council for approval at the November meeting. Cllr Vandesteen will write a draft Financial framework document for a more tailored approach to FinRegs.
- 8. Preparation for Budget 2021/22**
  - 8.1.** Cllr Gregory proposed a timeline to develop the budget and to set the Precept for 2021/22 based on a bottom up view. A request to all councillors has been circulated, asking for budget sums to be identified by 11<sup>th</sup> November. Cllr Vandesteen proposed to canvass the residents of Batheaston on 3 budget options: reduced, current level and increased. The survey to take place in December allowing for a top down setting of the precept in January with detailed budgeting to follow. This will also require input from councillors in November to identify what each option could/would deliver. There needs to be careful preparation of the option information in relation to the impact of increases by band. The council needs to define what level of response would be meaningful, and what level could be disregarded.

9. The Clerk/RFO made a report on the following items

- 9.1. The committee approved the renewal of the Council's Insurance Policy for £1970
- 9.2. The committee approved a contract for the Internal Auditor, Mrs Bridget Bowen, to undertake the Internal Audit for the current year, in April 2021 at a cost of £300 for the day's work.
- 9.3. Actions from previous meetings were reviewed
- 9.4. The Clerk reported there were now 4 community groups with weekly sessions in the Rhymes pavilion. These are on reduced rates. The committee agreed this facility should be made available to the wider community.
- 9.5. Cllr Vandesteen commented on the Clerk's report.
- 9.6. **Business System.** When will the business system be live? The Clerk is confident the training and data imports can be completed this calendar year to be using the new business system from January 2021.
- 9.7. **Website.** In the recently circulated Communications document the clerk is highlighted as a key resource for future council communications. How is the load to be shared and what resources are required for the budget? There is technical support already budgeted for this year. The clerk will be the principal communicator but will rely on support from councillors.
- 9.8. The committee are concerned that the Clerk often seems to be short of time to complete tasks. It would be useful to understand where hours are spent on routine matters. This will then inform the budget for next year. The Clerk considers this year has been a year of recovering muddled finances and documentation and that the council business will run more routinely in future. The committee agree there has been a lot of additional work in the first half of this FY.