

**Draft Minutes of the Ash Parish Council Finance Committee Meeting
Monday 16th November 2015 at 7.30pm Ash Village Hall Library**

1. **Present:** Mr Foat (Chairman), Mr Busby, Mr Cooper, Mr de Bont, Mr Loffman, Mr Palmer, Mr Porter, Mr Turner,
In attendance: Ms Jones
Apologies: Mrs Steed, Ms Bernard, Mr Gregory
It was resolved that the reasons for absence from Ms Bernard (personal), Mrs Steed (personal), and Mr Gregory (personal) be accepted.
2. Declarations of Interest – Mr Foat in respect of Heritage Centre Grant being a trustee of the Ash Heritage Centre.
3. Public Contribution Time: a parishioner had provided an email about planning application 15/00624. The Chairman determined to read it out when the planning application was taken.
4. Planning Applications
 - 4.1 DOV/15/00624 as amended | change of use and conversion to residential dwelling (Use Class C3) (existing lean-to walkway to be demolished) and erection of a garage | **Chequer Inn, Chequer Lane, Ash, CT3 2ET** . *No objections*
 - 4.2 Appeal APP/X2220/W/15/3135538 re 15/00480 | Prior approval for the change of use from agricultural buildings to three residential dwellings | **East Street Farm, East Street, Ash CT3 2DA** *Documented usage is other than agricultural; metal containers don't meet the structural criteria*
 - 4.3 DOV/15/01094 | Divert overhead line and replace two spans of line with underground cable | **Overhead Lines HED, Molland Lane, Ash, Sandwich** *No objections*
5. The Minutes of the Finance Committee held on 17th November 2014 were proposed by Mr Cooper, seconded by Mr Busby and accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.
6. Matters Arising - none
7. The Chairman outlined current year expenditure to date and spending to be completed by year end, based on the 01 April – 31 October Receipts and Payments report and projections prepared by the clerk/Responsible Finance Officer. Spending was tracking according to budget with savings likely from less spend on administration costs including staff and councillor training. A refund on the maintenance contribution to DDC for the public conveniences should underspend that budget by at least £1000. Major costs to be incurred in the final quarter of the year included the annual insurance premium and it was noted outstanding tree surgery invoices were expected to be around £1,500 + VAT. Receipts had been boosted with a refund of VAT that was paid in the 2014-2015 F/Y of just under £3000 and a further significant VAT refund in the vicinity of £6,000 was expected from 2015-16 expenditure which included the outdoor gym purchase. Further income would derive from allotment rents levied in January 2016. Equipment costs and repairs and renewals on village property and the Recreation Ground were presently down on budget but expected to rise with works being carried out in the remaining 4 months of this financial year.
Overall the financial position was encouraging. Reserves were healthy and expected to remain at a similar level. 2015-16's deficit budget should end in surplus, once careful spending was offset against the few unforeseen costs.
8. To be considered for the 2016-2017 financial year's expenditure budget:-
 - i) Recreation Ground:
 - the probability of having to remove mature trees due to disease conditions remains high. **It was resolved that** £5,000 be recommended for tree maintenance including surgery. Decisions arising from council's on-site inspection of the trees on Nov 28th to take into account a review of vehicle access and parking provisions, could alter this sum. Monies from Reserves would be ringfenced if proposals for significant changes at the Ground were to result.
 - replacing parts on the aging aerial slide had kept this major asset functioning but rusted bolts in the core frame affecting its structural integrity had rendered it no longer worthwhile to repair. A replacement aerial slide was considered a priority due to its

popularity with young people. The preference was for the new equipment to be in place for summer 2016 if at all possible. An indicative quote of £14-£20,000 for either a wood or steel structure covered the removal of the current slide, installing new slide and safety surface. Further quotes would be obtained, and cost savings explored eg the dismantling and removal being organized by the parish council. **It was resolved that** £5,000 be recommended for the purchase along with grants to be sought for the remaining cost. It was noted seeking external grant support could delay the installation beyond the summer.

- **It was resolved that** repairs to playground safety surfaces be managed within a budget of £1000 for all 'Play Equipment Repairs', with the ringfenced sum of £2000 for Safety Surfaces to remain earmarked for future replacement.
- **It was resolved that** provision be included for replacement bins, picnic tables, seating within a budget of £1,500 for all Recreation Ground equipment; **that** 'mowing/hedging' be increased by £500 to £4,000 given the current 3 year contract was ending on 31st March 2016 and a new contract is to be negotiated from 01 April.

ii) Parish Environment

- The Street toilets: an inflation adjustment using last year's measure could see a 2% increase in contribution costs plus capital expenditure items (capped this year at £2,000). **It was resolved that** £10,000 be budgeted.
- The Burfords Alley drain had been inspected and no problems discovered
- provision for a village sign had been discussed within the traffic working group but opinion was leaning to deferring it to a future year.
- **It was resolved that** 'Pound Corner' expenditure, allocated £100, be applied to all costs associated with this piece of parish council owned land, whether plantings, the surface or tree related.

iii) Neighbourhood Development Plan: Mr Turner indicated a similar figure should be allocated for 2016-17 as progress has resumed with expenditure expected for the next phase. **It was resolved that** £5,800 be budgeted.

iv) Road safety and traffic matters: The traffic working group had identified a number of desired enhancements for village roads that would have to be checked with KCC and/or DDC as to process, permissions and timetable, if and when the enhancements were possible. It was clear funding and resources at KCC and DDC posed significant limitations on parish based initiatives and monies to cover or contribute to costs would be needed to support initiatives being implemented. **It was resolved that** £18,000 be earmarked from Reserves, being the sum of ring fenced reserves currently allocated to traffic related matters or projects no longer applicable or as pressing, these reallocated monies being Speed Reduction (£500), Speed Indicator Devices (£2,500), Pound Corner trees (£2000), Projects (£2,000) Security (£6,000) and Local Services (£5,000).

v) Grants – Mr Foat left the room for the discussion on the Heritage Centre Grant. **It was resolved that** the Grants be: Heritage Centre £550; Ash Village Hall £2,000; Westmarsh Village Hall £100; St Nicholas Church Council £600.

vi) Youth Provision: **It was resolved that** a sum of £700 be budgeted for P.A.C.E to run a programme for village youth, similar to the successful programmes run in previous years.

vii) Projects: no new projects were proposed given the aerial slide and traffic initiatives were primary and already covered elsewhere. **It was resolved that** S137 expenditure be allocated £5,000 to allow for exceptional expenditure, subject to the legislative requirements for using this power.

viii) Administration: **It was resolved that** purchase of a replacement laptop be brought forward, providing a safety net during transition from the old to the new laptop until the old laptop was fully decommissioned. **It was resolved that** allowance be made for a black and white replacement laser printer, whilst more expensive initially should be less expensive to run than the old inkjet. £1,250 to be budgeted for IT Hardware/software and £250 for Office Equipment.

Small increases in ‘Subscriptions’, ‘Insurance’ and ‘Telephone’ were recommended to allow for increases in professional fees and to take account of rising costs of products and services. ‘Audit Fees’ to increase with a possible change of internal audit services.

- ix) Staff Matters:. The budgets for Employment Costs to include the increase to the clerk’s hours from 20 to 24 hours per week, the 2% payrise awarded to the Environment Officer, and provision for any COL adjustment negotiated for local government workers, capped at 1% with consequent adjustments to pension contributions and NI. A small contingency amount to be added to cover paid staff absence should there be a need for a replacement.
 - x) Other items. **It was resolved that** the £6,000 EMR for contingencies be retained and unspent monies from the outdoor gym EMR and deficit EMR be returned to general reserves.
9. Allotment Charges: These are to increase w.e.f Jan 2016. **It was resolved that** there would be no change to rental rates for the 12 months from Jan 2017.
 10. An amended draft budget would be prepared for December’s Parish Council meeting. The level of the Revenue Support Grant is expected to reduce (possibly by a third) but may not be confirmed until later in December. It was noted DDC’s usual guidance information for budgeting had not yet eventuated due to information from central government being later this year. The precept request is due to go to DDC in early February 2016. The timing of the monthly meeting on 1st February will allow the precept to be finalised at that meeting.
 11. Review of Financial Regulations –to be referred to the December meeting of the parish council.
 12. Review of Risk Assessments on Governance – to be referred to the December meeting of the parish council.
 13. Any other business: A Millfield resident’s letter requesting the parish council endorse a house swap request between her and a Canterbury family was considered. It was agreed to support the request on the understanding there is no waiting list for a Millfield house and the swap would not disadvantage an applicant with significant links to Ash parish.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.31pm.