

Stinsford Parish Council – 9 January 2023

Budget 2023/24 - Report by Responsible Financial Officer

Reason for report

In order to comply with statutory deadlines for the setting of budgets and precepts (ie the amount of Council Tax to be levied by the Parish Council), it is necessary for the Council to agree these at the January meeting and submit the details to Dorset Council before the deadline of 31 January 2023.

Context

For 2021/22, the Parish Council agreed a precept of £5,500. The expenditure approved by the Parish Council for the full financial year totalled £12,242.82. This included expenditure totalling £6,555.55 from the Groundwork UK grant for the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish.

The Parish Council also agreed a precept of £5,500 for the current financial year, 2022/23. To date, the Parish Council has approved expenditure in 2022/23 of £3,581.16. Approval of further expenditure of £854.35 is sought at this meeting. Assuming that this is agreed, the total amount approved to date in the current financial year will be £4,435.51. This includes the repayment of the unspent grant from the Groundwork UK grant totalling £338.00 for the development of the Neighbourhood Plan for the parish.

Assuming that this expenditure is approved, the Parish Council currently has reserves of **£22,709.92**. Of this, £13,888.09 is ring-fenced. The level of reserves held by the Parish Council in comparison to its current precept has been queried by the External Auditor during previous annual audits. However, an explanation was provided about the amounts ring-fenced for specific activity, in particular the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, and no recommendations were made in the Auditor's reports.

Looking ahead, it is likely that projects arising from the emerging Neighbourhood Plan will require investment by the Parish Council. Similarly, there may be a need for the Parish Council to contribute towards the repair and refurbishment of the River Path and bridge in order to ensure that this key right of way through the parish is safe for users. Such funds will need to be drawn from the Parish Council's reserves.

Recommendation

I have prepared budget estimates (attached). These total £6,305. Given the amount held in reserves, I propose that the precept be maintained at £5,500 for 2023/24 to meet the Parish Council's costs.

Dorset Council has confirmed the 2023/24 tax base to be used for Stinsford is 141.9; a decrease of 2.2% from that used for the current year. A precept of £5,500 would therefore equate to a Council Tax charge of **£38.76** for a Band D property for 2022/23. In the current year this is £37.90.

I therefore recommend that the Parish Council consider:

- (i) **the attached draft budget estimates for 2023/24; and**
- (ii) **whether to issue a precept of £5,500 for 2023/24.**

Kirsty Riglar
Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
January 2023