

FINANCE REPORT to ASH PARISH ANNUAL MEETING 2019

The audited statement of accounts, along with the Annual Governance Audit Return, the Auditor's Certificate for the year ended 31 March 2018, are on the Ash Parish Council website.

The budget for 2019-2020 and the estimated summary of Receipts and Payments for this financial year (ending 31st March 2019) were delivered along to every house in the parish.

Receipts and Payment

- £137,466 was carried over from the previous year
- Receipts for the year ended 31 March 2019 were £85,635
- Payments for the year ended 31 March 2019 were £69,327 (£119 more than the estimated figure in the newsletter).

Differences from March 2018 to March 2019 Receipts

- Base interest rates increased last year and this nearly trebled the interest received (although still a small amount at £336).
- Precept - there was a 3% increase in the Ash Parish Council tax (the "precept") which was an increase of £1.94 per household for the year. The annual amount paid last year, by each household was £67.70 for the year (based on a Band D property).
- The grant received of £5,825 was for the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Differences from March 2018 to March 2019 Payments

- Employment costs were £4,076 higher.
- NDP costs were lower at £3,100 and except for £378 were grant funded.
- Planning advice costs were much lower in the year at £1,509 compared to £4,492 and included the final payment on the Westmarsh Drove appeal heard in March 2018.
- The Traffic Calming project did not move forward until early this year and the detailed proposals now have gone to KCC. There is £24,000 in the current budget out of reserves.
- General repairs and renewals at £1,177 were £900 higher. This is because the five bus shelters in the parish have been repainted and repaired.
- New equipment of £580, includes the purchase of the Defibrillator Cabinet installed at the Ash Village Hall. The defibrillator was donated by the Kent Fire & Rescue Service.
- The maintenance of the Recreation Ground was higher as the hedge bordering the allotments has been cut back.
- The tree surgery arranged for March this year, has been delayed. The money allowed for this work last year has been transferred into the current budget.

Other running costs were generally in line with the previous year's payments.

Budget 2019-2020

The Parish Council tax (precept) for this year 2019-2020 is £80,378 and was increased by 2.98% which is an increase of £2.02 per household for the year. The annual amount for each household is £69.72 (per Band D property).

- Employment costs have increased – although part of this is due to HMRC PAYE returns
- The increase in newsletters to £2,200 is for the printing of the Ash directory.
- General office expenses of £1,290 - £400 of the increase is for the binding of minutes.
- IT equipment at £840 - as the parish council's laptop may need to be updated.
- Room hire will increase as there will be a full year of Planning and NDP Ctte meetings.
- Training was increased for the expected new councillors and for updating some of the training for staff.
- Election costs of £3,000 was in case it was needed for the 2nd May elections. This amount was not included in the budget calculations for the parish council tax.
- NDP at £9,100 includes part of the unspent grant received from last year and the balance from reserves that had been accumulated for this purpose.
- Planning advice at £3,000 is from reserves.
- Maintenance, Repairs / renewals - £3,130 includes new litter bins and the Weddington Lane Track improvements.
- The project for the new playground equipment, safety surfaces and improvements to the entrance and car parking area totals £28,600 with a further amount in reserves.
- Recreation Ground toilets at £2,750 is for the general re-painting and repairs needed and the increased cost of electricity and water.

Reserves

- 2019 Reserves of £9,000 are for items such as contingencies or for work which may need additional funds by April 2020.
- Ring fences reserves are kept for possible future expenditure such as potential S106 projects, the NDP should it not be completed by March 2019 and Green Spaces which is for Saunders Wood and any open spaces that would be of benefit to residents.
- General reserves are held as a safety net. Last year the actual general reserves were £50,090 and by March 2019 they were at £78,166 as some of the projects in last year's budget had not been started or for others completed. This year, if all the planned projects are completed, the general reserve will be around £56,445 at year end.

Much of the work of the Parish Council goes on in the background of the lives of the residents – only really obvious when it does not happen. It is hoped that this year some of the larger projects will be completed and will noticeably improve the quality of life in the parish for all residents. The budget reflects this aim.

Mrs Christine Haggart
 Clerk and Responsible Finance Office
 Ash Parish Council