

Agenda Item 9.2

Recommendations from The Estimates Committee for the Proposed Budget 2023/24; the Level of Charges 2023/24; the Precept 2023/24; and Possible Projects 2023/24

Report by Clerk to the Council and Responsible Financial Officer

The Estimates Committee met on 9 January 2023 and considered the detailed report from the Clerk to the Council and Responsible Financial Officer. The report was circulated to all Members. It was marked “confidential- for members only” due to the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Para 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Having considered the details the following are the Estimates Committee recommendations:

1. The Budget for 2023/2024 is attached and Members are recommended that they resolve to approve the Budget for 2023/24. The Budget includes reserves totalling £82,861 which would allow for developments, events, elections, and general reserves. The general reserves are in line with the NALC guidelines which say they should be within a range of 3-12 months of gross expenditure;
2. Members are recommended to approve the charges for 2023/2. It is proposed that charges remain the same as in 2022/23. The charges would be:

	Up to 3 hours	Up to 2 hours	Up to 1 hour
Not-for-profit users	£20.00	£18.00	£10.00
Occasional users	£20.00	£18.00	£10.00

Commercial users	£48.00	£38.00	£28.00
Children's parties	£30.00	£30.00	£20.00

Community Groups (providing services free of charge) do not pay any charges. Political Groups pay the same rates as not-for-profit users.

3. It is recommended that the Precept for 2023/24 be set at £52, 276 which would be at the same amount as 2022/23.
4. St Helens Council are considering removing the Community Improvement Fund from its budget for 2023/24. If this were to happen the historical support received from local St Helens Councillors would no longer be available. These funds have historically supported the Childrens Remembrance Service, the Christmas Tree Lighting and the maintenance and planting of the barrier baskets. The Clerk/RFO was asked to find out about the costs of the first two. She was also asked to approach Billinge in Bloom to see if they would be willing and able to take on the works associated with the barrier baskets if the fund was removed. The Clerk/RFO will verbally report progress to the meeting.
5. The Estimates Committee also identified a number of projects which they recommend the Parish Council should explore further. This would involve developing full proposals (including how they would be funded; any issues/implications; etc). It would also be important to involve and consult with Parishioners. If agreed, reports would be brought at the appropriate times to the Parish Council for approval. The reports would include financial, environmental and social impacts.

The projects identified were:

- a. replacement of play equipment (which is now around 20years old) and overall development of Dam Slacks for the benefit of the Parishioners. This included exploring sources of grant funding etc;
- b. purchase of mobile speed indicator and identifying potential budget for associated running costs;
- c. flagpole to be installed in Millennium Garden;

- d. internal improvements to The Public Hall with aim to save energy costs and ensure compliance with health and safety requirements; and
 - e. lights to make a feature in the centre of the village of The Millennium Garden/ The Parish Hall.
6. The Clerk/RFO is also aware that she was asked to look into the implications of setting up a Community First Responders Scheme. She would propose that this is added to the above list of projects.

PROPOSED BUDGET 2023/24

	Budget 2022/23	Forecast 2022/23	Estimate 2023/24
Staff Costs			
Clerk	15,992	16848	18196
Superannuation	4860	0	0
Cleaner	4,940	4940	5325
Employer's national insurance	1190	1166	1274
Employee expenses	30	0	0
	27,012	22,954	24,795

Administration

Stationery, postage	159	159	159
Audit	300	400	400
Subscriptions	975	869	929
Chairman's Allowance	600	0	0
Members expenses	23	0	50
Miscellaneous	317	192	340
Telephone and internet	422	422	451
Insurance	1255	1255	1255
Conferences/training	100	240	110
Elections	4800	4945	4945
Printing	654	598	654
Publications	1183	569	602
Information Technology	840	985	1053
	11,628	11,193	10,948

Public hall

	Budget 2022/23	Forecast 2022/23	Estimate 2023/24
Repairs and maintenance	440	1356	450
Cleaning materials	60	397	350
Water	800	195	300
Electricity and gas	1600	2464	2465
General improvements/major repairs	1000	5345	2032
Options Appraisal for Developing The Public Hall	5000	500	0
	8,900	10,257	5,597
Less public hall income	(6,201)	(6,201)	(6,201)
	2,699	4,056	(604)

Other expenditure

Dam Slacks - maintenance/Health and Safety	1892	1892	2022
Millennium Gardens – maintenance	690	2640	738
Millennium Garden - PWLB loan	4026	4026	4026
Barrier Baskets	1100	0	0
Improvements in the parish	7500	8106	8665
	15,208	16,664	15,451

Section 137 Expenditure

Grants, Events and other expenditure	5784	5829	6281
Christmas Poster Competition	345	300	350
	6,129	6,129	6,631

	Budget 2022/23	Forecast 2022/23	Estimate 2023/24
Other income			
Insurance Claim	(0)	(3275)	(0)
Less Payments funded from Reserves			
The Public Hall Reserve	(5,000)	(500)	(0)
General Reserves	0	(145)	(0)
Election Reserves	(4,800)	(4,800)	(4,945)
Net expenditure after reserves	52,276	52,276	52,276

Proposal for Precept 2023/24

As shown above, the proposed net expenditure for 2023/24 is £52,276.00. This assumes that any election is funded from the reserves held for that purpose. Election reserves will need to be built up again for the next elections and will form part of future budget proposals.

The proposal is that the Precept for 2023/24 is therefore £52,276.

It is estimated that the Council will hold the following reserves as at 31 March 2023:

	£
Development Reserve	32480
Events Reserve	1200
Election Reserve	4945
General Reserves	44,236
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	82,861
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