Sharlston Parish Council

Meeting of the Finance & Personnel Committee – Monday, 27th January 2025 6.00 pm

Sharlston Community Centre

Minutes

Present:

Cllr P Belbin

Cllr J Craig

Emma King, Clerk

1) To note minutes of last meeting and any matters arising
   There were no matters arising that did not appear elsewhere on the agenda.

2) To consider the proposed budget for 2025/2026 for recommendation to the full Parish Council
   The Clerk began by taking the committee through the remaining committed budget for 2024/25. She identified both a best- and worst-case scenario noting that it was highly unlikely that all committed amounts would be spent:
   - Salaries – offset by contribution from Sharlston Community Centre Management Committee for Caretaker
   - Cllr expenses – only for travel / subsistence, anything else coded to correct heading
   - Election expenses – only if electors call when a casual vacancy arises
   - Training – only if requested / required
   - Books – unlikely as big investment last year
   - Purchases – ad-hoc / lifebelt signs only committed expenditure
   - Open Day – banner – can be moved to next year's budget
   - Events – unlikely to move on consultation / history event before end of March
   - Grounds maintenance – additional hedge cut, likely to be from next year
   - General maintenance – emergencies only e.g. pot-holes at Clifton Rd land
   - Flowers – do we need before end of March?
   - Grants – school unlikely now that they don't want the bollards
   - 137 – unlikely though Clerk is doing work on powers
   - Contingency – have to assume worst case and fully commit
   - Projects – unlikely to complete before end of March
   - Legal – nothing imminent

The Clerk then showed how the closing figure for the year end would affect the two different scenarios for the 2025/26 budget. She highlighted that even with a best-case scenario, the parish Council would be likely to end the next financial year at least £10,000 lower than the previous year due to large and unplanned expenditure this year. To demonstrate this, she showed a spend analysis for 2024/25 to date with the work on the allotments and the removal of the garages at the new Clifton Road land featuring as the highest spend.

The Clerk then took the meeting through each budget heading, highlighting where savings were being made and where budgets had been increased based on an average of the last three years, known expenditure and ring-fenced commitments. The main savings were in the Grounds & Fees/Subscriptions headings and the main increase to expenditure was in the Flowers & Lights heading.

Overall, the Clerk was proposing a budget which would have £2300 less expenditure than the current year in an effort to make savings. In addition, she noted that the VAT return would be more than anticipated as it would cover an 18 rather than a 12-month period. All other income streams would remain the same or reduce and therefore the Clerk strongly recommended that the Parish Council focus on income generation in 2025/26 via the following suggested methods:

- SID income
- further sponsorship opportunities - PC assets
- CC - management - incorporate into PC and receive income directly but will be responsible for costs
- funding opportunities - recruit a specialist bid writer
- Potential increase to allotment rent (development & policy changes to be considered first)

3) To consider the Clerk's proposed precept levy for recommendation to the full Parish Council
   As a result of the above, the Clerk initially recommended an increase to the precept from £37000 to £40000 which represented a average monetary increase of just over £3 per household. However, the Committee felt that the percentage increase, being higher than that of the Council Tax increase as a whole, could not be approved and therefore recommended an increase of £1500 to £38500.

4) Quarterly report on Gifts & Hospitality Register
   There was nothing to report

5) Date of next meeting & items for next agenda
   To be confirmed.