

**DUNKIRK PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council**  
**Dunkirk Village Hall**  
**19.30 Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

Present: Councillors Jeff Tutt (Chair), Dan Brice, Peter Demery, Stephen Hitch and Kevin Kemp. In attendance: Richard Bartley (Clerk).

**20.15 APOLOGIES**

Apologies and reasons for absence were received from Cllr Julie Coleman as she had a prior commitment.

**RESOLVED:** That Cllr Coleman's reason for absence be accepted.

**20.16 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no interests disclosed, and no requests for dispensations.

**20.17 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

There were no members of the public present, and no written comments.

**20.18 FINANCE**

**20.18.a Parish Budget 2020/21**

Cllr Tutt introduced the draft budget version 7, circulated previously. Cllr Kemp provided A3 printed versions. Cllr Tutt drew attention to the introduction of extra budget lines needed to account for additional work areas, potential grants and the new website requirement. As a result there were several changes compared to previous years. Some cost headings were new, or had had to be increased, but under other headings savings could be achieved, notably in electricity supply costs. Consequently, the net result was that the total budget of £27,000 was not much different to the £26,088 version 1 budget considered 16<sup>th</sup> December. The largest single item in the draft budget was the proposed investment in further replacement LED fittings for parish street lighting columns. However, having drawn down reserves in previous years to pay for LED replacement work to date, the precept would need to increase in the coming year to meet increasing costs and going forward to keep the Council's finances robust. The budget notes showed that to balance the budget a further £8,995 would be needed from reserves, and included provisions for ongoing legal matters, new legal requirements for audit, additional insurance, Neighbourhood Plan consultations, by-election costs and VE and VJ Day events during 2020. The draft budget enabled the Council to respond to matters of public concern and provide new facilities, for example dog waste bag dispensers. An accessibility regulations compliant website will be a new legal requirement for all parish councils from September 2020. However, the present EiS website provided free by KCC is not compliant, and KCC will close it down in August 2020. Thereafter the Parish Council will have to develop, manage and pay for its own website. The proposed creation of a new sinking fund recognised that the Council would need to replace its capital items in future. As in previous years, the draft budget did not include any personal allowance for councillors, but the chair's allowance of £100 was now identified separately in budget line 34. The clerk expressed concern about the risks attached to a further depletion of reserves. He advised that the Council was eligible to apply to the Public Works Loan Board to borrow funds. As an alternative to spending down the remaining reserves, a low fixed interest rate loan could fund capital works, such as the LED replacement programme. This approach would enable works to go ahead in 2020, but spread the cost manageably over several years. Councillors agreed to consider this option at a subsequent meeting. The draft budget allocation for grass mowing was considered to be unrealistically low for a whole year. In the course of discussions it was recalled with gratitude by those present that Dunkirk had benefitted from all the work that the late Cllr Howland had contributed to the parish free of charge, over many years. The budget now had to catch up: it needed to reflect the actual time and machinery costs. In the absence of any previous figures this was hard to predict. Additionally, the number of cuts needed will be influenced by the weather, especially if 2020 proves to be a wet summer. Given the uncertainties, it was proposed to transfer all £500 from budget line 15 and allocate £200 from this sum to playing field maintenance (line 18) and transfer the balance of £300 to contingency (line 26). The adequacy of the provision for any VE and VJ Day community events (line 31) was also questioned, but after consideration it was left unchanged.

**RESOLVED:** That a budget of £27,000 be agreed for 2020/21, subject to the amendments to budget lines 5, 18 and 26 proposed above.

Proposed: Cllr Tutt. Seconded: Cllr Brice. Agreed unanimously.

**ACTION:** The clerk to amend and circulate the final budget (version 8) as agreed and calculate the % increase compared to the 2019/20 precept.

**ACTION:** The clerk to prepare a paper on PWLB capital funding options.

[Post meeting note: the agreed Band D increase in the parish precept is £4.50 a year. This equates to 18.55% or 1.23p a day, per Band D dwelling]

#### **20.18.b PARISH PRECEPT 2020/21**

Cllr Tutt had checked the draft Parish Precept claim form before the meeting and he stressed that it is essential that Swale BC receives the form by the deadline of Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

**RESOLVED:** That a precept claim for £14,907 be agreed for 2020/21.

Proposed: Cllr Kemp. Seconded: Cllr Demery. Agreed unanimously.

#### **20.18.c PRECEPT REQUEST TO SWALE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**RESOLVED:** That the clerk signs and dates the Parish Precept Claim form in the presence of the Council, and ensures that the signed claim form reaches Swale Borough Council by the deadline.

Proposed: Cllr Kemp. Seconded: Cllr Hitch. Agreed unanimously

**ACTION:** The clerk signed the Precept Claim form at the meeting.

**ACTION:** The clerk to scan and email the claim form to Swale BC forthwith, post the signed copy and notify councillors when it had been acknowledged.

[Post meeting note: Swale BC Finance Department acknowledged receipt of the signed precept claim form 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020, within the deadline]

#### **20.19 MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)**

Cllr Tutt was pleased to report considerable progress with the proposed Dunkirk and Boughton Traffic Regulation Order for a weight restriction of 7.5T on through traffic. Cllr Tutt with Cllrs Gould and Bowles had attended a very constructive meeting in Ashford with KCC Highways officers 8<sup>th</sup> January. The officers accepted the public petition and other evidence presented by the three parishes and agreed to address the issues raised. Officers also agreed to work up a detailed proposal for decision by the Swale Joint Transportation Board in March. The outstanding matters to be resolved by officers include the precise location of the necessary 7.5T prohibition signage at either end of London Road, and more problematically where they should be located on the side roads, notably Courtenay Road. Cllr Kemp reported that he had assessed the ten potential providers of parish council websites identified by KALC and he would be ready to present his findings at the next Council meeting 20<sup>th</sup> January. Cllr Tutt had received an approach from another potential website supplier and he would forward the contact details to Cllr Kemp. A general discussion followed and it was agreed that any new website would need to work much harder.

The clerk drew attention to Sections 39, 41 and 50 in the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and the NALC Chief Executive's bulletin, issued 13<sup>th</sup> January. This confirmed the Government's intention that it would not apply referendum principles to parish councils in the next financial year. However councillors were asked to note that the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2020/21 consultation, para 3.4.3 states that it '*will keep this matter under active review for future years.*'

Whereas the Government has also confirmed that it will continue to apply referendum principles at 2% for all shire and district councils. The general point was made and accepted that in future the parish precept will need to stretch further.

**ACTION:** Cllr Tutt to forward new website supplier's details to Cllr Kemp.

**ACTION:** The clerk to add parish website options to the next agenda.

#### **20.20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020 at 19.30, Dunkirk Village Hall

**RESOLVED:** to note.

#### **20.21 CLOSE OF MEETING 20.22**

**DRAFT**

Richard Bartley

Clerk, Dunkirk Parish Council

20<sup>th</sup> January 2020 Signed.....