

BUDGET NOTES 2021-2022

PAYMENTS

Staff Salary

The current 3 hours per week are insufficient to complete all tasks required. Calc guidance is that even the smallest of parishes would require 4 hours per week if meeting bi-monthly.

The halving of the hours when meeting frequency was halved was too simplistic a calculation. Having timed the preparation for meetings, producing reports and agenda, the meeting itself then the completion of the minutes afterwards, the total time per meeting is approximately 10 hours.

The previous clerk was employed for 6 hours per week (312 per annum), so if we say that there were 12 meetings per year, that would take 120 hours out of that total, leaving 192 hours for general business. If we assume that the 192 hours are still required to maintain the level of communication and services, then add 6 meetings at 10 hours we come to a figure of 252 hours per annum, which is just under 5 hours per week.

The clerk has been working extra hours unpaid to try to meet the needs of the council without compromising the budget, but it would be unreasonable to expect that to continue. With historic gaps remaining to be addressed in the council's policies and other documentation and the work required to make the website more consumer friendly/intuitive, the number of hours required is unlikely to fall in the near future.

The NJC pay scale review, when released during the course of the year, is backdated to April 1st, so any increase should be budgeted for the entire year. The 2020-2021 increase was 2.7% for scale 13, so the budget estimates include a 3% increase to allow for this.

The clerk's annual performance review is due April 1st 2021. If the Council is satisfied with the clerk's performance and decides to move them up to the next pay scale there will be an increase in cost. It is prudent to include this in the budget estimate, even if it is subsequently not required.

Items to decide upon:

There are 3 suggestions for hours:

- a) Increase to 5 hours per week (260 pa)
- b) Increase to 4 hours per week with a provision for an additional 4 hours per month as required (256 pa)
- c) Keep at 3 hours per week basic plus 10 hours per meeting, with a provision for an additional 4 hours per month as required (264 pa)

Staff Expenses

The clerk's travel costs are kept to a minimum by incorporating journeys in with their daily commute as far as possible. In the 9 months to 30/12/20, the total travel claimed was £50.40, so an annual estimate would be around £70. If,

when travel and meeting restrictions are lifted, in-person rather than virtual meetings or training courses are resumed, this may increase slightly, so a provision of around £100 would be sensible.

Telephone, broadband and home office costs of £10 per month were negotiated for the 2020-2021 year and no increase is being sought.

Total budget £220

Internal Auditor

The Council resolved in August 2020 (min ref 034/2020/21) to appoint the internal auditor to also carry out a half-yearly interim audit. This means that the total cost for the 2020-2021 year is £125. The decision cannot be revisited until the Council's March 2021 meeting, when a decision can be made regarding the 2021-2022 year. The budget remains at £125, although savings may be made if the Council then opts for a single, annual audit.

Subscriptions

Registration with the ICO is a requirement. As we pay by direct debit the fee is reduced to £35.

1) Calc/Nalc membership was just over £200. (budget £210 for this year)

2) CRUG subscription was not paid last year but we may wish to rejoin for the coming year - £10

3) SLCC membership to provide support and personal development opportunities to the clerk – 2020 fees were £177 but membership was not taken up. (budget £185 for this year)

Items to decide upon:

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 & 2
- c) 1 & 3
- d) 1, 2 & 3

Legal Costs

There are no known items that should incur costs at the moment. However, if we take over land, such as the football field, allotments or bowling green, then we may need to appoint a solicitor to deal with any associated contracts. In any event, it is wise to put some provision in place so that we are able to meet costs should anything unexpected arise.

Items to decide upon:

- a) Emergency provision only £300
- b) Emergency + simple asset transfer £700
- c) Emergency + multiple asset transfers £1200

Postage

Most communication is now carried out through email, so postage costs have been reduced from previous years. In the 9 months to 31/12/20 a total of £32.88 was spent, so around £45 per year. Allowing for any price increases, a budget of £50 has been allowed.

Stationery

The initial office set up costs were higher as a number of items (files & folders etc) all had to be purchased to get the documents in order. Ongoing the costs are likely to be lower. My best estimate going forward (including printer inks) is around £60 per year.

Zoom

The Zoom subscription costs £14.39 per month. The Council will need to consider when it believes that we will be allowed to return to in-person meetings and if we would still require the Zoom subscription after that date.

Item to decide upon:

Number of months to budget for the Zoom subscription

Village Hall

Similar to the Zoom consideration. When are we likely to need to hire the hall for meetings again? Hall rent was £20 per meeting.

Item to decide upon:

Number of meetings to budget for hall hire.

Software

Security and office software. Total £100

Website Costs

The Council's website is hosted through Wordpress with a premium package at an annual cost of £84. Although cheaper hosting packages can be found, as premium themes are used on the site, migrating to another host is made extremely difficult and is likely to involve a lot of the clerk's time, thereby making it uneconomical to change.

The domain name cost can vary each year. A saving can often be made by buying the name for a number of years in advance. A single year is likely to cost around £15, whereas 5 years may cost around £50. Renewal is due in November and prices can be confirmed then.

Item to decide upon:

- a) Hosting + 1 year domain £100
- b) Hosting + 3 or 5 year domain £135

Staff Training

There are two main training courses, the ILCA (Introduction to local Council Administration) which is £144, or the higher level CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration) which is £958 (£898 if SLCC member). Apart from either of these two there may be occasional development courses available through Calc. If 4 courses were attended, usually over two days, the cost would be in the region of £160.

Item to decide upon:

- a) General Calc courses only £160
- b) Calc courses + ILCA £304
- c) Calc courses + CiLCA £1118

Member Training

Calc offers a number of training courses which can assist members in their role and enable them to serve the community better. If approximately half of the members attended a two part course in any given year, the cost would be around £240.

Notice Board

The board at the side of the village hall needs either repair or replacement. Would a new noticeboard be required if a new bus shelter is sited on Ramsey Drive? A repair could probably be carried out for under £100. To replace the noticeboard with one of a similar quality would cost around £750, or a more basic one would cost around £200, The £200 board would be suitable for inside the bus shelter, but may not last long if exposed to the elements outside the village hall. Because of this, in the estimates below, the new VH board is based on the more expensive option only.

Item to decide upon:

- a) Repair VH board only £100
- b) Repair VH board + new board Ramsey Drive £300
- c) New VH board only £750
- d) New VH board + new board Ramsey Drive £950

Play Area

There are a number of repairs required on pieces of equipment and a schedule of ongoing maintenance should be put in place. Grant funding will be sought

for any new equipment so that does not need to be included in the budget. General repairs (£1200), top up of bark (£600) and equipment inspection (£150) are all included in an estimate of £1950.

Waste Removal

We currently pay £5.95 per week to have the bin emptied on Parton foreshore. If we were to have additional bins to empty, these would presumably be charged at the same rate. I will look into the possibility that other departments of CBC can take this task on for us, or alternatively, will seek quotes from alternative licensed carriers. Absent any better figure, I will budget for 3 bins @ £6, assuming a slight increase. Total £936.

Bus Shelter (repair)

The shelter on Criffel Road is regularly vandalised. The cost of polycarbonate is increasing so the estimate is £140 to repair if it needs to be done again next year.

Other Assets

Various land areas upkeep – car park, The Square, Memorial garden etc.
Estimate for ongoing small jobs £500

Grass Cutting

If PPC takes over additional land such as the football field, then there will be an obligation to cut the grass. Even if PPC don't take over any additional land, while it is available for the use of the residents of Parton, they may wish to pay for additional cuts over and above those carried out by the landowner in order to keep it maintained to a pleasant and usable standard. In previous years it would appear that PPC have made significant overpayments to Copeland Borough Council (CBC) as they charged in full for all cuts rather than just the additional cuts. In this year that has gone to the other extreme and no additional cuts were made as we disputed the contract. In previous years we have paid over £1000 to CBC for cutting their own grass. A more realistic figure might be half of that, but if we took over responsibility for the land, the figure would rise. By agreeing what needs to be cut and when, we can put the work out to tender to obtain best value for the parish.

Item to decide:

- a) Do not take on additional land, maximum spend £500
- b) Take over additional land, maximum spend £1000

Plants

Various bedding plants and planters around the village, possibly some lengthsman work. Memorial gardens, war memorial planting etc. Estimate of around £500.

Council Insurance

Based on last years figure + 3%

Lowca Footbridge Insurance

Based on last years figure + 3%

Elections

There is due to be an election in May if current restrictions are lifted. We can't know if this will be uncontested or not. Obviously a contested election will cost the parish money. There is £280 of ring-fenced reserves for election funding, so to play safe it may be necessary to budget around £500 to try to maintain the reserves for 2024.

Remembrance Sunday

This is the centenary year for the war memorial and while some grant funding may be available to assist, plus we would ask Moresby for assistance since it is jointly owned, it would be prudent to put in a provision towards any work that may need to be done. Estimate £250 (+ £250 from Moresby)

Grants

A provision for giving grants and donations to local good causes. £1000

Bus Shelter (addition)

The proposed bus shelter (agenda item 9) is £2160 + £40 for bolts. Installation would probably cost in the order of £500, so £2700 in total.

Item to decide:

Yes or no?

Laptop Computer

Calc advise that to comply with GDPR, the council should have its own dedicated laptop. At the moment the clerk is using her spare laptop for council business, which also contains some of her own files. The council should either consider buying a new laptop, or the clerk could remove her own files from the one that she is currently using for council business and sell that to the council. Currys PC World have an HP Pavilion laptop on sale at £529 which would be suitable. The clerk's model of laptop, Acer Aspire 6, currently sells for around £350 as a refurbished model, but she would be prepared to accept £250 for this.

Item to decide:

- a) do not buy a laptop £0
- b) buy a new laptop £529
- c) buy the clerk's laptop £250

RECEIPTS

Wayleaves

Received from ENWL. Approximately £33 per annum

Garage Ground Rent

There are currently 12 garage plots. Somebody has suggested that they may be able to put a 13th one on the end, but that would have to be considered and it is not included in the calculations here. The ground rent of £25 p.a. has been at the same rate for several years and council may wish to review this.

Item to decide:

Annual ground rent

Administration Charges

When researching the garage policy it was noted that nearly all councils charge an administration fee when taking out a tenancy. Clearly there is time involved in getting agreements signed etc, so this is intended to help towards the cost. If we said that on average 2 garages changed hands per year and budget on this basis.

Item to decide:

What administration fee do we wish to charge?