

MONEY MAKES THE PARISH COUNCIL GO ROUND

Well, yes, plus a great deal of work by dedicated and gifted volunteers who share at least one thing in common- their love of our Village. But money, of course, greases the wheels without which little would be achieved.

Most of you will know that the principal source of income to the Parish Council (PC) is the annual precept which is collected via the council tax. This has been maintained at £16000 for several years and corresponds to £37 a year for the average house owner living in a band D house. It is worth making the point that allowing for inflation the real cost of the precept has actually gone down over the years.

We also get some annual grants from the County Council; around £1300 for the lengthsman- that is the person who carries out maintenance of our public areas such as cleaning the ditches, trimming the hedges, preserving the benches on the recreational field and so on and £3000 for the Parish Footpaths scheme- so useful for the locals as well as an attraction to the ramblers who provide a source of tourist income for the Village. In addition an investment chips in just over £1000.

The budget from April 2012 to March 2013 has just been approved. This was published on our web site and on the public notice board but because it has to be expressed in a somewhat arcane format I thought that it would be useful to go over the highlights in a more user-friendly way especially when we are entering an exciting and interesting time for the future of our village.

Under the Localism Bill, now approved but awaiting formal implementation, the PC acquires more delegated powers to initiate projects. In addition, as a quality PC, we are able to carry out tasks formerly the province of the County Council. Two good examples are local road gritting and the provision of a community library to replace the loss of the mobile library formerly funded by Herefordshire. We are also allowed to create new amenities where the need is seen; for example the inauguration on a trial basis of a monthly bus service to Ross.

Added to these, we have put aside some funds for public participation in the Parish improvement scheme for which a great many projects have been put forward for consideration, a new version of the Parish Plan, last published in 2005, celebrations covering the Jubilee and a further £2500 grant (£5000 in total) for the "Room for All" project to build an additional room at the school for the Play Group and for general use. Oh, and a sizeable contribution to the major revamp of the Pavilion which should increase its attraction as a meeting place for social and educational purposes. Phew!

So you can see that the next year or so is going to be very busy and exciting.

And expensive too. Certain necessary expenses have to take first priority. The Parish clerk is a paid employee of the Council, we are still paying off a loan which was taken out years ago when the present memorial Hall was built, the lengthsman's services far exceed the grant received, and insurances have to be paid, election expenses met and so on. Then certain arguably discretionary

costs are expended. The recreational field, PC owned but leased to the Field Committee, is subsidised as is the upkeep of the Community's last resting place (commonly known as the churchyard). Provision is also required for the maintenance of the track leading from Capler Lane to the Pavilion. So with all the new activities and initiatives gobbling up money we need to dip into the cash balances built up over the years to the tune of £5000 to £6000 to make ends meet. But that is what reserves are for provided we keep enough money available for that dreaded word "contingences" (i.e. horrors that materialize out of nowhere).

As a quality PC our activities and associated expenditure should be transparent and explainable to you our parishioners. As I have mentioned, the formal way budgets are presented may for some be a bit difficult to understand. I hope this informal commentary helps. In any event the Finance sub group of the PC is available to answer any specific queries.

Peter Davis

Peter is a member of the Finance sub group (860719). Other members are: Derek Colley (leader of the group on 860986), John Hardwick (860332), David Clark (860017), Hillary Mansell (860354), and, last but not least our Chairman, Gareth Williams (861009) and our clerk, Mel Preedy on 769480.