

Little Chalfont Parish Council
Council Meeting 9 May 2012
Report on the Accounts 2011/12

Item 8

(At the time of preparation, the accounts are unaudited)

Income

Total Income £235,587

The majority of the Parish Council's income is derived from the annual precept which is issued to Chiltern District Council before 1 March in the preceding financial year. The precept is paid in two instalments (April and September) and for 2011/12 Parish Councillors agreed to hold the precept at the previous year's level, £208,433.

Money is also earned via hall hire charges, pavilion hire, tennis charges and pitch hire for cricket and football. Over the year cricket income and hall hire income have been over budget which is pleasing. Although the football pitches are well used, some senior teams have disbanded which has led to a reduction in earnings of just over 10% (£602).

Interest from investments has understandably been low over recent years. Nonetheless £2452 was earned in the year. The Council finalised a new investment strategy at its 14 March 2012 meeting which is in line with guidance issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government

Expenditure

Total Expenditure £265,657

Main areas of expenditure are repairs and maintenance, grounds maintenance, salaries, street lighting, utilities and special projects. This year saw the second year of the retendered grounds maintenance contracts which, following a competitive tendering process, had been awarded to Spruced-Up and Amersham Town Council. As reported last year, these contracts have led to significant savings (over £40,000) on previous years and provide enhanced service and flexibility. The Council was pleased to renew these contracts for a further period of three years starting in April 2012 on the same terms. The street lighting contract will also be renewed on current terms with Forde and McHugh.

Repairs and maintenance of the Council's rather aged buildings is a never ending task. The Council endeavours to make sure that the facilities it provides are clean, tidy, warm and comfortable. For example, this year the Westwood Park pavilion has undergone a number of improvements including new flooring in the kitchen, new security lighting and improved storage for sports equipment. At the Village Hall, the main hall has been repainted, external lighting improved, windows replaced following vandalism and ventilation improved. For many years the drive and car park at Westwood Park have been deteriorating. Last Autumn they were both resurfaced (net cost £12,451) which has greatly enhance the appearance of the park and the smoothness of the journey into the site. There was also unbudgeted expenditure at Westwood Park of over £3,000 (net) when the aging sewage pump finally had to be replaced.

It was reported last year that the Council had successfully applied for a £50,000 “Playbuilder” grant which would go towards the cost of a new playground at Westwood Park. Following a rigorous competitive tendering procedure, the playground was installed in 2011 with a grand opening taking place on 31 August. The total cost of the project was £89,000 (net) and the resultant play area has been a great success.

Reserves

The Council started the year with an opening balance of £311,646 and will close with £281,576 (subject to audit).

Bank Accounts/Investments

The Council’s current account is with Lloyds TSB in Amersham. A further account is held with HSBC, also in Amersham. Higher interest earning accounts are with Scottish Widows Bank, Santander and The Cooperative Bank.

Budgetary Process

The budget is reviewed on an ongoing basis and expenditure reported and discussed at each Council meeting. The annual preparation of the next year’s budget commences in October and the Clerk prepares a draft which is discussed with the Chairman and a nominated Councillor before presenting figures to the full Council for further detailed discussion and agreement.

Audit

The Council has an Internal Auditor (Ernest Newhouse) who examines documentation, procedures and the year end return prepared for the External Auditors (Mazars). Both Auditors report back to the Council. Hopefully the forthcoming audit process will be as satisfactory as last year’s.

JEM 9 May 2012