

Woburn Sands Town Council

Town Meeting 2021

Finance Report

In these exceptional times this year's report will be somewhat shorter than usual. Expenditure in the past year has been mainly concerned with maintaining the basic functions of the Council in keeping the Office working and paying for the running costs of our halls.

Throughout the year, except for a small period during the first lockdown, the Clerk worked from the office even though the restrictions meant that it had to be closed to the general public. We continued to pay our staff in the normal way and their remuneration and associated oncosts made up the bulk of our general expenditure as is usually the case in a normal year. Costs were incurred in ensuring a smooth transfer to our new Clerk and her deputy mainly through the retention of the outgoing Clerk for a few months to aid the training of her replacement.

The Council has now completed its plan to move to the employment of a full time Clerk and a part time Deputy which has been necessitated by the ever-increasing workload placed on the Council which is highlighted by the current need to respond vigorously to the major developments of SEMK and EWR which impinge on our community.

Halls' income has been severely reduced by the restrictions imposed to combat the pandemic and there has been a shortfall of approximately £20000. This has been partially offset by a Government grant of £10000 but general running costs which are usually covered by income have remained largely the same leading to a hole in the budget that needed to be covered from overall expenditure.

The budget set for 2021/2022 anticipates a continuing loss of income due to the effects of the pandemic but recent signs give some reasons to hope that this will not be as great as we might have feared. In order to keep the precept requirement as low as possible a further sum of £19000 will be taken from our reserves to subsidise our expenditure. This still leaves the Council with a sufficient contingency fund but cannot be repeated too often in the future. The agreed budget for the forthcoming year represents a 3.4% increase to the council taxpayer.

Finally, this year we say goodbye to Pauline and Lynne. Pauline has overseen Halls' bookings in an exemplary manner throughout her time with the Council and has been an invaluable aide to Lynne. We wish her well for the future.

Lynne has been the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) for the Council as well as Town Clerk. During her long tenure she has seen the demands of the RFO role increase considerably. Scrutiny of public expenditure has never been so great and ensuring that correct procedures are followed and the associated documentation is accurately completed and recorded has been vital in ensuring that the Council's finances are in good order. Lynne has managed the finances in an outstanding way, and she will be a hard act to follow. As

chair of the Finance Committee, I would like to express my personal thanks for her guidance and support in all our work. We wish her all good fortune in her retirement.

Clive Cowmeadow. Chair of the Finance Committee. April 2021