

Clavering Parish Council

Chairman. Stephanie M. Gill
The Bower House, High Street, Clavering, Saffron Walden. CB11 4QR
Telephone: 01799 550212

STATEMENT TO ACCOMPANY THE AUDIT COMMISSION LOCAL COUNCIL ANNUAL RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2018

The total of reserves held by Clavering Parish Council is shown in the Annual Return to be £43,046
This equates to 2.61 times the precept (including local authority grant) for 2017/18.
(2016/17: £42,433 being 2.89 times the precept including local authority grant)

We wish that the following be noted:

The General Reserves.

These are shown to be £ 13,795.13 (2016/17 : £10,899)

There was an expectation for these to be lower as:

- i) approximately £1,250 budgeted for Grass Cutting and Tree Maintenance was not required in the 12 month period. A further £250 committed for tree work was delayed due to weather and the invoice submitted in April 2018
It should also be noted that the budget figure for the precept 2017/18 had to be set before the tenders for the parish grass cutting had been received; this figure has been accordingly revised for 2018/19.
- ii) The Parish Council committed in 2016/17 to an Affordable Housing Survey in conjunction with the Rural Community Council of Essex for a quoted approximate total cost of £1000. This took place November 2017, but actual cost was only £361 (excl VAT) as there was only a 30% return of questionnaires.
- iii) Less additional hours were required by the staff member, also fewer training sessions undertaken which further reduced travel expenses, amounting to an approximate total of £500 not drawn down.
- iv) The Parish Council is currently taking advice under a legal dispute: see note below.
Expected invoices were not submitted in 2017/18.

The Earmarked Reserves.

As at 31st March 2017 the Council had the following approved Earmarked Reserves:

- 1.2 £20,002.21 Capital Projects and/or Revenue Works which would improve Clavering Parish Community
3. £6,285.62. Parish Land Maintenance/ Repairs and Renewals
4. £772.78 Allotment Reserve
5. £ 1,191.03 Election Expenses
6. £ 1,000 Legal Expenses

1.2

These funds arose from payments received for Easements over Village Greens under the CRoW Act.

The Council continues to actively following a process to agree a programme of improvements which would best utilise its Earmarked Reserves denoted 1. 2. above for the benefit of the Parish.

We have paid out only £ 2, 532.90 before VAT in 2017/18. (2016/17 : £ 436.00 before VAT)

S.M.

6/18

Applications for Community Projects continue to be considered by the Council, which acts with diligence in appraising the applications and at all times ensures that all projects approved bring 'value added' to the Community.

3. This figure is higher than expected as the Parish invited tenders in 2016 and again throughout 2017 for the refurbishing of the village benches and seats: this work is still outstanding as, though expressions of interest are given over, no tenders have been forthcoming.

5. There was an uncontested Election in May 2015, hence the drawdown from this reserve was not required.

6. Invoices for Solicitor's Work relating to an ongoing legal dispute have yet to be submitted see Notes to Accounts below.

We wish for the following to be noted also regarding large variances in the payments and receipts for 2017/18 when taking 2016/17 as the benchmark .

'Precept': 13% increase as District Council Grant reduced, both grass cutting tenders plus extra hours worked by Clerk were expected to be higher.
'Staff Costs': 11% decrease as less additional hours were required of/taken by the clerk
'Other Receipts' : **37% decrease as neighbouring parish council no longer contributing to buying in of a green waste service from local District Council, reduction in the interest rates earned for funds held on deposit , one-off receipt of Transparency Grant in 2016/17, awaiting £632 in VAT returns for 2017/18.**

Note to Accounts:

Clavering Parish Council has been involved in a legal dispute since October 2016 whereby a third party executed unauthorized works to a Village Green, which is also land owned by the Parish Council. The Council sought to resolve this matter by asking the 3rd party to unpick the works and return the land to its previous condition. It hoped to do so without being required to engage solicitors for paid legal advice and therefore utilized the NALC Legal Services.

The 3rd party refused to carry out the required works. The NALC Legal Services advised the Parish Council to employ a Solicitor to work on its behalf to achieve a resolution.

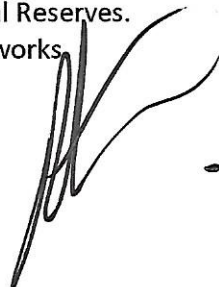
Clavering Parish Council, via a Committee set up to deal with this issue, regularly carries out Financial Risk Assessments of this on-going situation, which are noted in the currently confidential minutes of the Parish Council and the appointed Committee.

Currently the Parish Council is responsible for, at worst, £6,000 of fees which will be met by £1000 from the Earmarked Reserve of Legal Fees and £5,000 from General Reserves.

The third party continues to refuse to carry out the required works.



Stephanie M. Gill
Chairman.



Robert E. B. Clayton
Vice Chairman