

## CLERKS REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL MEETING 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023

### **Actions from September Meeting**

- Further written response to Bus Consultation sent, basic acknowledgement received from Essex councillors, no considered dialogue offered
- Letter sent Hepworth Hall Farm Shooting Ground regarding the Essex Masters annual Clay Pigeon shoot

### **Braintree Council Services**

I am spending more time these days chasing BDC for services that have been missed – particularly the emptying of poo bins. Almost on a fortnightly basis in recent months, one or more of the bins have been missed and whilst the head of the team – Richard Bass – is always excellent with a response, still the bins have not been addressed. I am advised that he has been assured by his staff that bins have been attended to. However, it is worthy of note for any discussions you may have with parishioners and/or district council representatives.

### **BDC Community Gardens Grant**

Grant received for a total of £3000, agreement signed and returned. Await return of copy agreement and receipt of funds.

### **Local Council Award Scheme**

I have chased the EALC, as the council's submission was sent back in August, in readiness for the September review. I have been informed, everything is still "in progress" and await further confirmation in due course.

### **Training**

I will apply to the new EALC Bursary scheme for Dorothy's forthcoming training, it may not be appropriate as this new scheme was launched after the training had been booked, but I think it is worth trying. It will save the council 75% of the total training fee.

Similarly, I have applied for, and had approved, the EALC Clerk's bursary which will provide 75% of the fee for the Clerks refresher course I will attend on the 30<sup>th</sup> November.

### **Clerks Salary**

New salary scales were announced earlier this month, which will be backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 (the usual delayed timeframe). I have received confirmation of changes from the council's payroll office – J&M Payroll Services, with a back payment of £260 to be paid in December, and an increase of £260 for the remainder of the financial year. This increase, together with a change to my personal tax code means that the council has now reached the threshold at which NI contributions must be paid – currently £17.94 pq, which again will be backdated for December. Paperwork for the December pay run will be at the meeting for sign-off.

### **Insurance Claim**

Following the recent theft of council machinery, 1x Stihl brush cutter; 1 x Stihl combi tool, a claim has been made to the council's insurers Clear Councils (BHIB now merged into Clear). Replacement products may be purchased and Clear will organise a net payment to the council less the policy excess of £125, upon sight of receipts.

### **Financial/Budget**

1. **Budget** I have circulated an up to date Budget spreadsheet showing Actuals v Budget up to end October 2023. Hopefully this will help towards your initial thoughts for Precept next year, as the next council meeting in January will be when you agree annual budget and Precept for 2024/25.
2. **Council Bank Account** I haven't made the "jump" yet due to the impending payment of Grant money from BDC towards the Mindfulness Garden.
3. **Electricity Charges** You will note a jump in monthly payments to NPower – this is following a price increase from 33.80p/kwh to 50.18p/kwh in September. I think this is just catch up after all the various one-off government subsidies were paid to consumer accounts last year. As a limited electric user, there is no real alternative pricing option for the council, but you should be aware of the price increase.

