**CLERKS REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL MEETING 15th May 2024**

****Year End Financial/Budget**

1. **Budget**  - The council’s end of year financial position was within budget.

Total income for Y/E 2024 budgeted at £13230 – actual was £13401.

Total expenditure for Y/E 2024 budgeted at £14470 – actual was £13904.

\*Note these figures do not include the £3000 grant towards the Mindfulness Garden

Some cost lines were exceeded but these were largely offset by savings made in other areas.

**Year End Balances**

Please note that due to timing of the Clerk’s salary at the end of March, which clashed with Easter bank holidays – the final salary payments for the year have been carried forward into 2024/25 figures. (I have allowed for that in what I have reported here, so you have a true picture). However, it will impact on 2024/25 budget lines so you will need to make an adjustment in budget for the forthcoming year.

The end of year **General Reserves** were **£6099** (original budget forecast was £5301, so good news!)

The council also has additional **Earmarked Reserves** for the Village Playing Field of **£4505** and **£3000** for the Mindfulness Garden

1. **Precept.** The first instalment of £6250 has been paid by BDC to the council.
2. **Annual Return.** All AGAR forms are now complete and ready for sign off at the meeting. You will all have read the Internal Auditors report and hopefully have found everything to be in order, but please do ask any questions. As the council income and expenditure still excess £25k (due to the continued Playground Project into the last financial year) the external auditor fee will be higher than usual again this year as the audit is more in depth.
3. **Council Insurance.** The council’s insurance policy has been updated to allow for the new pathway which was installed following renewal last year. However, you do still receive a discounted rate due to your Foundation Status. Also worthy of note is that at £403.68 the policy premium is still lower than it was back in 2010 !
4. **Annual Street Cleaning** – The annual grant from BDC remains at the 2023/24 level of £847.56. Contract due to be signed at meeting.

**Updates from March meeting**

**Hulls Mill** – I am advised via Cllr.Schwier, that the Highways Panel was due to consider budget approval for improved signage at either end of Hulls Mill Lane at the end of April. Further updates awaited

**Wig-Wag Safety Lights** – I await a response from Essex Highways regarding my query on who has responsibility for funding maintenance of the lights. At nearly £400 just for a call out, the future funding of maintenance for these lights is concerning. The original initiative was led by Highways so it is hoped they will fund maintenance costs. I am not entirely hopeful I will receive a positive response but perhaps ECC hold a larger contract with a supplier which may provide a level of discount for parishes?

**Annual ROSPA Inspection** - the inspection will go ahead in May as usual, to take advantage of the discounted rates (as previously advised). I have asked for the pathway to be included which will come at an extra fee.

**Bank Account** – Unfortunately I could not get the account open with Unity Trust Bank as the paperwork was incomplete, and because of the subsequent councillor resignation, I now have to start the process all over again. My apologies but I will probably require signatures to new paperwork in due course.

**Playing Field Pathway** – as many of you are aware there are currently 2-3 areas of “sinkage” on the pathway – between the play area and boules pitch. A contractor for Premier Play has visited the site (8th May) and proposed a section of the path is removed, with the base dug out and a gravel base introduced (effectively a soak-away). It is acknowledged that the area of pathway affected is on a slight downward slope, which may have been adversely affected by the unprecedented wet weather we have had since last October. The warranty on the path does run until June 2024 but it may not cover all the associated costs. I await fully documented details of proposed repairs.

**Produced by Ann Crisp, Clerk 8 5 2024**