**CLERKS REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL MEETING 6th November 2024**

** **Financial/Budget**

1. **Budget**  - Please see the 6 month budget review spreadsheet.
* The council is currently forecast to have a Y/E shortfall of £761 (Budget at beginning of year predicted £262 shortfall). It is possible some further small savings may be made on some budget lines which will help reduce this figure.
* Reliance to cover the shortfall will be on existing reserves, but it should be considered that reserves will need to be heavily relied on for the proposed car park resurfacing.
* The remaining funds in the Village Playing Field Reserves will be allocated to the mindfulness garden and the resurfacing of the playing field car park.
* Based on current assumptions the council will have just over £4k in reserves at the year end (after both mindfulness and car park projects are complete). This will be appr.£200 short of the council’s reserves policy of maintaining 50% of the Clerk’s annual salary.
* Staff expenditure looks excessive, but this is due to the Q4 salary payments from 2023/24 falling into the current financial year due to payment date falling at a weekend. This was allowed for in end of 2023/24 reporting. The council operates on a receipts and payments basis.
* As advised to the Personnel Committee, the annual review of statutory payscales was advised at the end of October. The Clerk’s payscale, as per contract, sits at SCP20 which now equates to £16.37ph (an increase of 62p). As always the pay award is backdated to 1st April 2024. The council’s payroll provider J & M Payroll Services will make all the necessary adjustments.
* **Essex County Council Locality Fund** – Cty.Cllr.Schwier has granted £500 towards the council’s project to resurface the village playing field car park. To be paid on provision of invoices. Must be spent by end of 2024.

**Predicted Year End Balances 2024/25 –** assuming both Mindfulness Garden & Car park Resurfacing Projects are complete

**Fundraising –** Nil. **General Reserves -** £4001

* The council’s reserves policy is to maintain sufficient funds to meet 6 months of Clerk salary costs (currently £4256).
* Precept is due to be agreed at the January meeting, I will update the budget forecast in readiness for that meeting, but I do not currently anticipate any significant variations from those reported now.
* It should be noted that following the government’s Autumn budget from April 2025, the council will be responsible for paying staff NI contributions as the threshold is being lowered to £5000pa. J&M Payroll will advise but will be appr.£5-600pa.
1. **Financial Monitoring –** Cllr.Last has undertaken a review of council payments and bank accounts for the period July-September.

**Updates from September meeting**

**Hulls Mill** – The issue of introducing new signage remains outstanding with the Local Highways Panel.

**Alderford Street** – Following previously reported damage to private property from passing large/heavy vehicles the council, in collaboration with Sible Hedingham & Castle Hedingham council’s, investigated whether SatNav directions could be updated for HGV’s to avoid rural minor roads. Advised that HGV versions of Tom-Toms etc already exist but may not necessarily be used by all. Some technical updates are due in the next 2 years, following a European initiative, to hopefully help reduce the reliance of traffic on minor and rural lanes. In meantime the only suitable solution would be the introduction of new width restriction signage via the Local Highways Panel.

**Wig-Wag Safety Lights** – The lights at the top of Lucking Street are now back in operation thanks to the efforts of Cllr.Johnson. This has saved the council at least £200 based on the quotes received from Solagen earlier this year.

**Defibrillator** – Has recently been checked to ensure fully operational and associated equipment remains in date. Details updated on The Circuit, the national database used by emergency services.

**Training** – Cllr.Brudenell will be attending Councillor Training Days 1 & 2 in November. 75% of the training cost will be covered by the EALC Bursary scheme.

**Change to .gov.uk** – Separate briefing paper refers. Industry recommendation, for which Cllr.Harris & the Clerk have recently attended an information webinar.

**Produced by Ann Crisp, Clerk 30 10 2024**