

Dereham Town Council

Finance and Governance Committee

December 3rd 2024

Agenda Notes

3. To consider grant applications

The grant applications are enclosed. There are applications from organisation which may be largely unknown to Councillors. The Town Council grant application process is simple and straightforward mainly because most applications are from organisations known to some Councillors who will have an appreciation of the value that the organisation does locally. If organisations applying are not well known to Councillors, or it is not clear what benefit the grant will provide to some Dereham residents, then Councillors shouldn't feel obliged to award a grant.

4. To review expenditure against budget

The Net Position by Cost Centre is enclosed with comments below.

Code	Cost Centre	Comment
6	Publications and subscriptions	A schedule is attached at the end of the report.
74	Memorial Hall General Repairs	There are some significant repair bills coming in notably repairs to roof flashing to stop water ingress (£900) and repairs to the Genie lift (£800). Servicing the raked seating £2,000 first service in 12 years. Gas engine service will be £5,659 this year, service every 5 years or so. The systems are getting older and repairs are needed.
167	Toilets - electricity	Finally got an electricity bill, first bill since refurbishment.
232	New Vehicle	Additional weights were needed to enable the tractor us utilise it maximum lift capacity. A pallet fork is still needed.
183	Memorial Hall bar income	£1,799.05 has been incorrectly entered and has been moved to expenditure.
227	Play Equipment Maintenance	This has gone up because there is now a dedicated member of staff overseeing the play equipment. More items are getting fixed sooner.

5. To consider budget estimates for 2025/26

The revenue budget estimates are enclosed. The proposals presented are based on a precept which equates to a 4% increase in a Band D property. The estimates for

Memorial Hall need careful consideration, due to the gas and electricity costs and repairs. The year-end staff costs are difficult to apportion against individuals because of the staff turnover last year, but the total amount for 2024 is correct.

Totals are summarised at the end with the 'gross capital and projects expenditure' of £366,691 becoming the 'Revenue budget surplus' at the top of the 4 year Projects and Capital.

6. To consider 4 year Project and Capital budgets

The amount allocated for 'Etling View play space' is now incorporated into revenue estimates, and Swanton Road added in but with no amount allocated as there have been no properties sold as yet.

There are two major cost risks which have necessitated recommended changes. These are, NCC being less accepting with regards to maintenance of the central area of the Market Place and potential refurbishment work on Assembly Rooms. While £76k for 'building capital repairs' and £15k for 'Major Refurbishment TC Assets' is set aside each year, that could be put against these risks. All the funds accumulated so far have been used to cover the refurbishment of Cemetery Lodge.

It is therefore recommended that the £5k allocated for improved toilet provision along with an additional £10k be allocated to 'major refurbishment TC asset'. This doesn't stop accumulated funds being used for the toilets, but it does mean that funds will now accumulate in an ear-marked reserve.

£75k has been set aside for the path at the Recreation Ground.

Utilisation of commuted sums from developers.

There are two types of commuted sum; the 10 year maintenance contribution, paid directly to the Town Council and the off-site contribution made in lieu of onsite provision of open space, which is made to and retained by Breckland Council until a project comes forward. For the 10 year maintenance contribution, this will be added to the ear-marked reserve for additional open space/sports pitches in the south of Dereham. The monies held by Breckland Council generally have to be spent within 4 years. Breckland currently holds £101k; there will also be monies due from other developments.

It might be sensible for the Town Council to utilise the commuted sums held by Breckland Council towards refurbishing the skate park, then the money Dereham Town Council has allocated to the skate park be placed in an ear-marked reserve for improvements to sports provision in Dereham. This would reduce the risk of monies being returned to developers because no suitable project has come forward within the 4 years, and also ensures that the monies are spent on a project the Town Council has prioritised rather than a project another body believes is a priority.

7. To consider Precept for 2025/26

The estimates and 4 year budgets have been prepared on the basis of a precept of £1,229,107 which equates to an increase on a Band D property of 4% or £8 per year.

	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-28
Target reserves	£454,198	£472,365	£491,260	£510,911

Difference between reserves and target.	-£93,844	-£116,983	-£38,722	£16,703
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For a 3% increase in a Band D with no changes to budgets the bottom line looks like this

Target reserves	£454,198	£472,365	£491,260	£510,911
Difference between reserves and target.	-£93,844	-£128,801	-£62,359	-£18,752

8. To consider increases in fees and charges

It is generally preferable to increase fees and charges by a small amount each year rather than no increase and then have a large increase further down the line. In 2024 councillors varied the increases as it was felt that some services may struggle with larger increases.

2024 increases:

- Allotments – 5%
- Cemetery - 4.5%
- Memorial Hall – 3%
- Markets – 1%
- Assembly Rooms – 3%
- Tennis Courts - 0%

9. To review Standing Orders

Standing Orders enclosed.

10. Update on Risk Assessments

In the last 12 months:

Work has been carried out at the Memorial Hall to improve fire safety. This has included new fire doors at high risk locations and an automatic fire suppressant system for the cooker. Further work is being carried out in certain areas to help reduce smoke and fire spreading. These are areas which were acceptable at the time of refurbishment and were passed by building regs etc, but following the Grenfell fire, risk assessors have been much more vigilant.

The play area inspection regime has been reviewed and improved, partly because the Council now has a member of staff with play area maintenance as a specific responsibility. These have come into a much tighter regime of inspections

Staff training is now being better coordinated as online courses are becoming more accessible. Outside staff will now take refresher courses at times when the weather is inclement. Courses include:

- Abrasive wheel
- Manual handling
- Asbestos Awareness
- COSHH
- Hand Arm Vibration
- Ladder safety
- Legionella Awareness
- Fire extinguisher

- Needles and Sharps
- Slips trips and falls

Not all course will be taken annually some may be biannually or 3 yearly.

11. Update on Balanced Score Card.

The balanced Score Card is enclosed. The Cherry Lane work was not prioritised but significant funding came available from Breckland and Breckland wanted to do the work, so it became a priority.

Likewise the encroachments on Etling Green were not prioritised but it got to the point where it was felt that action needed to be taken.