

Elsenham Parish Council

Finance Committee Meeting held on 6 December 2023
at 12.30pm in Old Franks.

Present:

Mr. B Burlton (Chair BB), Mrs. F Lambert (FL), Dr. G Mott (GM),
and Mrs. L Johnson (Parish Clerk LJ).

Members of the public:

None.

Minutes

1. Apologies for absence. None.

2. Declarations of Interest. None.

3. Signing of the minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2023 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4. To look at the predicted forecasts for 2023/24 and budgets for 2024/25 submitted by the committees.

Three committees, Flowerbed, Playing Field and EROWOS had submitted projected figures to the 31 March 2024 and budget figures for 2024/25.

BB had added these figures to the Budget and Precept Form along with the figures agreed at the last Finance Committee meeting.

If all the proposed budgets are agreed by Full Council this would make a substantial precept increase.

EPC presently have approximately £145,000 deducting EMR and predicted until 31 March 2024, EPC would have approximately £45,000 – £50,000 in general reserve. LJ said she thought a reserve of this amount was too much for a village parish council, there was no eventuality, which was not covered by the budgets or insurance, that warrant needing this amount of reserve.

EPC can decide to do one or more of three things.

1. Leave the budgets and increase the precept.
2. Cut some of the budgets, so precept is lowered.
3. Take some funds out of general reserves to top up the budgets, so again lowering the precept.

Members reviewed the budgets to see if any could be reduced.

4500 Contingency £5,000 – this could be removed, as EPC would have funds in general reserves.

4276 Speed Watch £150 – This budget could be transferred to the PCSO budget.

4278 Neighbourhood Watch £1,000 – This budget could be transferred to the PCSO budget.

4231 Playground general maintenance £6,000 – This budget could be decreased by £4,000 to £2,000, the same budget as 2023/24. The new paths in the playground would have to be put on hold or a grant obtained.

4226 Litter Picking £2,750 – This budget should be £2,625.

Budgets to be added.

PCSO £4,500.

Climate Change & Environment £2,000.

Elsenham News £3,500.

The contribution from the Elsenham Youth Football Club (EYFC) was discussed.

The Chair of EYFC had provided some details of the club's finances. EYFC currently have just over £50,000 in the bank. The charge per member is, £240 for league players, £160 for non-league "fun play" players.

But the issue that caused the main concern was the ratio of children, with 165 children from Elsenham, 24 from Henham, 138 from Stansted and 116 from other villages.

These figures show that the percentage of Elsenham children benefiting from the EYFC was only 37%. Stansted only runs two youth football teams, which could be the reason why 138 children joined Elsenham football club. It was agreed that LJ would contact Stansted PC and ask for a contribution of £3,600 towards the maintenance of the playing field, as over 31% of the children that play for the Elsenham football club come from Stansted.

It was agreed to recommend to Full Council that EPC raise the contribution that EYFC pay to £9,000 per year, this payment is for the maintenance of the playing field and use of EPC's ground. The contribution will be a one-year agreement. The Finance Committee will review the 2025/2026 budget to see how the grant from the Football Association, if successful, affects the payments.

The precept for 2023/24 was £85,500 as the budgets stand for 2024/25 the precept required would be £110,000.

EMR

GM said he would like an EMR for Tye Green of £2,000. EPC owns some land at Tye Green which is mown, free of charge by Mr. Ray Turner. If this arrangement had to cease for any reason, this would add a considerable amount to the Grass Cutting Contract.

A new EMR had also been requested by the Playing Fields Committee of £2,000 for 'hard surfaces in the playing field.

The budgets for 2024/25 are higher than the predicted income for 2024/25.

It was noted that villages of similar size to Elsenham set larger precepts.

It was agreed that at the meeting on 8 January 2024 the new budgets would be proposed first in order of value.

- 1) PCSO £4,500.
- 2) Elsenham News £3,500.
- 3) Climate Change & Environment £2,000.
- 4) Playing Fields Committee of £2,000 for 'hard surfaces in the playing field, EMR.

5) Tye Green £2,000 EMR

BB will circulate a document setting out the budgets and the options Full Council have.

- Reducing the general reserve by £15,000.
- Removing some budgets;
Contingency £5,000.
Speed Watch £150.
Neighbourhood Watch £1,000.
- Increasing the EYFC contribution to £9,000 per year.

Until the Ready Reckoner is made available from UDC, EPC cannot tell, by how much, an increase in the precept would affect residents.
2023/2024 precept was £85,500. BB thought EPC could be looking at a precept of £100,000.

5. AOB.

The next Finance Committee meeting arranged for 15 December was cancelled.
The next meeting will be held on 2 January 2024 at 12.30pm.

The meeting finished 2.45pm.