

## Arkesden Parish Council – AGM 15 May, 2023

### Parish Clerk's Financial Statement

The Arkesden Parish Council operating budget for 2022/2023 was finalised in December 2021. As we had seen in previous years, the anticipated expenditure of £16,627 surpassed intended income of £11,805. While the healthy starting back balance of £7,056, primarily the result of low expenditure during the covid years, put the council in a secure position for 2022/2023, the disparity between the income and expenditure will require careful planning by Council and Clerk over the next few years. It is intended that over the next few years, and following the 2023 elections, the Council will measurably reduce the amount of its annual starting operating balance.

The budget required a precept of £11,000 which saw no increase from the previous year and remained in the Band D for council tax at £55 per annum – marginally more than £1/week. The precept together with financial contributions from the Millennium Field Committee for insurance and the ROSPA playing field inspection, receipt of a UDC grant for the Queen's birthday, a Locality Fund grant, and reimbursement of £870 in VAT resulted in an income of £13,867 for the year. The total expenditure for the year was £14,806.

Unique expenditures for 2022/2023 included contribution to the Jubilee edition of the Village News, contributions to Queen's birthday tea towels, as well as support for the Christmas tree festival. The Council also contributed to Neighbourhood Watch signage and the purchase of a replacement bench for Quicksie Hill and one for Poore Street. Annual charities included the Hundred Parishes Society, the UDC Citizen's Advice Bureau, Essex and Herts Air Ambulance, the PCC to pay for churchyard lighting during the winter, and regular donations to the Arkesden Village Hall and the Village News.

By the end of March 2023, the Parish Council saw a starting balance for 2023/2024 of £6,117. Overall, the numbers work out at:

- Balances brought forward as of April 2022 - £5,803
- Precept - £11,000
- Total other receipts - £2,867
- Staff costs - £6,157 (due to government clerk payment wages increasing and two additional hours per week)
- Other payments/running costs - £8,649
- Balance carried forward as of April 1<sup>st</sup> 2023 - £6,117
- Total fixed assets - £6,623 (down from £9,100 in 21/22 due to write-off of filing cabinets and updated to depreciation rates of 25% and 33% as noted below).

Fixed Assets include (bracketed numbers refer to FY 21/22 values):

- 2 Filing Cabinets £0 (£270)
- 9 Seats £2,565 (£3,420)
- 3 Notice Boards £1,924 (£2,565)
- 12 Litter Bins £990 (£1,320)
- Information Board £1,013 (£1,350)  
(all above at 25% depreciation rate)
- Monitor £131 (£175 (33% depreciation rate)).

NB – The clerk's printer remains functional but has a limited lifespan. The computer was not replaced when the new Clerk took up the reins in summer 2021, with the Clerk continuing to use her personal computer but having transferred all the files to MS360. While this system works well now, a computer

is likely to have to be purchased for any future Clerk. The state of all the assets will be reviewed by the Clerk and a Cllr in FY 23/24 to determine accuracy as to their condition and lifespan.

Finally, only £315 of the roughly £3,000 which was in the 2023 budget for contingencies including election costs, legal charges, and for general expenses was used to cover purchase of signage for Arkesden Neighbourhood Watch and for the Parish Council Christmas tree for the Christmas tree festival. Legal costs incurred in response to the Mulberry House planning appeal were costed at £480 but will be charged to FY23/24. This resulted in the Council only overspending by £938 during FY 22/23. However, returning to my initial point, if we continue to spend at this rate, even with the Clerk having secured a total £1,200 in grant income in FY 22/23, we will have exhausted our contingency within two to three years.

Please also note that the audit for FY 22/23 is being completed, and the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for FY 22/23 will be posted on the noticeboards and the website. Approval of an *exempt* return will be finalised at the 19<sup>th</sup> June Arkesden Parish Council meeting.

### Planning Matters

During 22/23, Arkesden saw 32 planning applications over the year, which included various tree orders along with some multiple applications for single building initiatives. These included the following:

1. 13 approvals – ten with conditions, two approved with no conditions and one approved certificate of lawfulness
2. Two Refusals
3. Two discharged with conditions in part and five with conditions discharged in full
4. Monks Cottage, Wood Hall and 13 Quicksie Hill are still awaiting determination
5. One Appeal regarding the buildings to the rear of Mulberry House, Wenden Road went to formal appeal in March 2023 but was ultimately refused.