

Sandridge Parish Council

Marshalswick Community Centre,
The Ridgeway,
St.Albans,
Herts
AL4 9TU

Tel: 01727 831871
www.sandridge-pc.gov.uk
Email: clerk@sandridge-pc.gov.uk

5th December 2024

To : Councillors Graham Leonard (Chair), June Reid, John Hale, Jennifer Roberts, Adam Twidell, James Lambert, Julie Oakley, Maurice Wells, Carol Chalkley, Mary Ternouth, Raihaanah Ahmed, Debbie Chachulski, Mike White, Luke Sieger

You are summoned to attend a meeting of Sandridge Parish Council, to be held at Marshalswick Community Centre on Wednesday 11th December 2024 at 7.30pm

Simon Thwaites
Parish Clerk

Members of the public and press are invited to attend this meeting. Questions or concerns may be submitted to the Clerk in advance of the meeting via email using clerk@sandridge-pc.gov.uk or by post, address as above.

A G E N D A

- 1. TO RECEIVE AND FORMALLY ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
Councillor Carol Chalkley
- 2. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**
 - a) To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda
 - b) To receive written requests for dispensations for declarable interests; and
 - c) To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate
- 3. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THE 13th NOVEMBER 2024**

4. QUESTIONS TO OFFICERS

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR RESIDENTS TO RAISE ISSUES OR ASK MEMBERS QUESTIONS

CLERK'S REPORTS

6. Monthly Accounts

Please find attached a schedule of creditor payments for the period 14th November 2024 to 11th December 2024. Of note is the higher than usual figure for salaries which includes the 2024/25 pay award, backdated to April. The accounts under the heading 'Online Transfers' are due to be paid on Friday 13th December 2024. It is;

Recommended

That the Online Transfers schedule is approved for payment and all other payments are ratified by Full Council.

7. 2024/25 Budgetary Control and 2025/26 Draft Budget

To review and discuss the draft budget for 2025/26 (Appendix 1). This was reviewed and approved in principle by the Finance Committee on 28th October. The draft has been compiled by the Clerk in consultation with officers, suppliers and committees. It prudently estimates the costs of future inflation, pay awards, capital works and events. The reserves position and the five-year forecast (see next item) are based on projected net expenditure of £379,299 in 2024/25 against a budget of £360,305. This represents a projected underspend on budget of £31,006 when the additional approval to use up to £50,000 of earmarked reserves for Sports and Recreation expenditure is factored in.

In summary, draft net expenditure for 2025/26 is £377,832. This is an increase of 4.9% on the current year's budget. The draft budget is a combination of ongoing operational expenditure and new one-off items of expenditure as previously agreed by committees. Details of exceptional items may be found in the furthest right-hand column, but in summary:

- Reduced Jersey Farm Woodland Park Budget in 2025/26 (£9,000)
- Reduced budget for the Parish Event in 2025/26 (£10,000)
- Increase in Grounds Maintenance contract costs £6,500
- Increase in Sports & Recreation capital spend £10,000
- Resurfacing works in Spencer Meadow car Park £14,000

. It is;

Recommended

That the draft 2025/26 budget as attached is approved by Full Council subject to funding (see item 9). It is further;

Recommended

That The Council considers two items in addition to the draft presented to the Finance Committee;

- To consider including in the 2025/26 budget the sum of £6,500 for replacement of the doors at the rear of Marshalswick Community Centre, leading to the Parish Office/Committee Room. The two key benefits being (a) to have a handle on the outside allowing the door to be opened from the outside by hirers/visitors (when not locked on the inside) (b) To improve the insulation and so the heat retention at this end of the building.
- An increase to employer NI contributions in 2025/26 of approximately £3,500 (following the recent budget when the personal allowance fell from £9,100 to £5,000 with an increased rate from 13.8% to 15%).

Please note, the above two items haven't been incorporated in any of the working papers in order to avoid confusion.

8. 5 Year Model

The attached five-year financial model gives an overview of the draft budget in Appendix 1 by identifying trends in income, expenditure and the level of reserves. Councillors should ensure when setting budgets that the proposed net expenditure will not create difficulties in maintaining reserves to an acceptable level in future years. It should be noted that an 'acceptable level' can refer to maximum funds held as well as minimum funds held.

The projection supports applying both the recommended draft budget at item 7 and the recommended precept at item 9. It is;

Recommended

That Members review and note these projections.

9. 2025/26 Draft Reserves, Precept and Funding Requirement

Appendix 2 details the opening and projected closing position on reserves. This report was reviewed by the Finance Committee on 28th October. The projection assumes that (i) the draft 2025/26 budget is approved, (ii) an 8% increase on the 2024/2025 precept is agreed and (iii) that reserves of £26,529 will be used to support the 2025/2026 budget. Also assumed is the accuracy of the 2024/25 projected outturn. The two additional items at point 7 are not taken into consideration and Members should therefore note that the first of these is a potential one-off cost while the second is mandatory and ongoing. The following should be noted when considering the above points;

Sandridge Parish Council continues to raise the lowest precept in the district (comparable councils - see the attached Reserves Summary) and economic challenges in future years will impact more heavily if the Parish Council fails to maintain balances. A prudent increase in next year's precept will safeguard against the potential for a proportionately higher increase in future years.

In general, future environmental priorities and global unrest could result in unforeseen increased expenditure for the Parish Council, for example the cost of energy or the costs associated with damage from more severe weather. This would not have been considered when setting CIPFA recommended levels of General Reserves of between 3 and 6 months operational expenditure. It is;

Recommended

That an increase on the 2024/25 precept of 8% is approved for the 2025/26 financial year. This would increase the precept by £26,022 from £325,281 to £351,303 in support of the draft budget at item 7.

10. Parish Council Schedule of Internal Controls

Please see attached a report by the Clerk documenting the internal controls in place to manage risk to The Council. It is a requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for The Council to formally document and regularly review its internal control systems. It is;

Recommended

That Members formally note the requirement to document internal controls and undertake to carry out a regular review measuring the effectiveness of those controls.

11. Internal Audit

Attached is a summary of the 2023/24 Interim Internal Audit. Of the 125 audit tests carried out 4 were negative (please see Audit observations). It is;

Recommended

That Council formally notes and approves the internal auditors report and the Clerk's response to the four recommendations made.

12. Sandridge Swift Initiative

A verbal update by the Clerk and PACE Officer on this Parish Council initiative. In addition, it is;

Recommended

By The Clerk and Councillor Wells that a £100 donation be made to each of the two organisations represented by speakers at the event, namely Hertford Swift Group and the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. The Hertford Swift Group will be carrying out swift box installations locally.

13. Matters of Note

- Staff appraisals will be carried out in early January 2025. These will be taken to the HR Committee on 3rd February.
- The new 'living roof' bus shelter on The Ridgeway, outside Phoenix Barbers is in place. This has been a successful collaboration between the County Council and the Parish Council, in particular Councillor Chalkley. Two planters have been installed and these have been filled with compost made on the Parish Council's community garden and planted up by garden volunteers with plants supplied by the Parish Council. Two new benches will be installed soon and the shelter will accommodate displays of local art.
- The new native hedgerow on the Jersey Farm Woodland Park has been planted by staff, councillors and volunteers. There was some amendment to the original planting plan following discussion with the householder.
- The Parish Council's Christmas lights in Sandridge, Marshalswick and Jersey Farm have now been switched on.

COUNCILLOR AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

14. Grant Applications

- Sandridge Carpet Bowls Club
Any award to be made using S.137 of the Local Government Act 1972
- The Sandridge Youth Sports and Community Association

Note 1. Grant expenditure so far this year amounts to £18,935 against a budget of £32,000 (£22,000 + £10,000 previously agreed).

Note 2. Grants previously awarded to the First Responders and the SYSCA were made under S.137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

15. Coopers Green Lane

To discuss the attached report and proposal from Councillor Roberts on flooding along Coopers Green Lane.

16. Meetings of Committees:

- Sports and Recreation Committee 4th December 2024
- Planning Committee – see below

17. MATTERS OF NOTE ARISING SINCE THE CIRCULATION OF THE AGENDA

The Council may not make decisions under this item

18. PLANNING MATTERS

The Planning Committee met on 25th November 2024.

Sandridge Parish Council's Planning Committee meets every three weeks to review and respond to planning applications received from the Planning Authority, St. Albans District Council. Planning applications commented on since the last Full Council meeting are;

114 Osprey Drive 5/2024/1504
1 Harrier End 5/2024/1864

Please note: Planning applications received at the Parish Office from the Planning Authority *after* the Parish Council agenda has been published may also be discussed at the meeting as may applications of complexity or applications likely to impact heavily on the Green Belt.

19. SUGGESTIONS AND/OR MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION AT FUTURE MEETINGS

Note: In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, the Parish Council meeting will be open to the Public unless the Parish Council resolves otherwise

Next meeting date – 8th January 2025 at 7.30pm – Marshalswick Community Centre