

Forest Row Parish Council

Clerk: Mr David O'Driscoll
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(Office Hours: Monday to Friday 9am to 2pm)

To: All members of FOREST ROW PARISH COUNCIL:
Cllrs. Josephson (Chairman), Davies, Hill, R Lewin,
T Lewin, McNally, Miller, Moore, Pritchitt,
Spackman, Summers, Waters, Williams, Withers
and Wogan

Community Centre
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Dear Sir/Madam,
Your attendance is required at an extra-ordinary meeting
of the FOREST ROW PARISH COUNCIL to be held on
TUESDAY 11TH JANUARY 2022 in the Garden Room at
the Community Centre at **7.30 PM**.

Date: 5th January 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D O Driscoll'.

Mr David O'Driscoll
Clerk to Forest Row Parish Council

THE FIRST FIFTEEN MINUTES WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR RELEVANT QUESTIONS AND
REMARKS FROM THE PUBLIC – IF ANY. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE WELCOME TO STAY
AND OBSERVE THE REST OF THE MEETING.

AGENDA

1. PUBLIC QUESTIONS
2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
3. TO RESOLVE TO DEAL WITH THE MINUTES & TRANSCRIPT OF THE MEETING HELD
ON 21ST SEPTEMBER 2021 AT THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING
4. TO RESOLVE TO POSTPONE CLARIFICATION OF ACTIONS FROM THAT PREVIOUS
MEETING AT THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING
5. TO DECLARE ANY INTERESTS OR REQUEST DISPENSATION PERTAINING TO THE
ITEMS BELOW
6. CHAIRMANS COMMENTS
7. TO CONSIDER AND MAKE ANY REQUESTS FOR AMENDMENT OF THE
CONSOLIDATED DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2022-2023
8. TO RESOLVE TO DEAL WITH ANY OUTSTANDING NOTICES, CORRESPONDENCE OR
CONSULTATIONS AT THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING
9. TO NOTE: ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION BY FULL COUNCIL OR REFERRAL
TO COMMITTEE.

**COUNCILLORS' BRIEFING TO THE EXTRA-ORDINARY MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL
TO BE HELD ON 11th JANUARY 2022**

3 & 4. RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS / CLARIFICATION OF ACTIONS

The main purpose of this EGM is to address the single issue of next year's revenue budget. It is therefore proposed to defer items of ordinary business to the next Ordinary Meeting.

ACTION: to resolve accordingly

- 5. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.** Only needed if any Member has a personal *financial* interest in the main business of the meeting (which is inherently unlikely).

7. CONSIDERATION AND REQUESTS FOR AMENDMENT OF THE CONSOLIDATED DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2022-2023

This is the annual meeting for all Members to scrutinise and comment on the consolidated draft revenue budget for the coming year, prior to formal adoption and precept-setting.

For this purpose Members are supplied with the following:

- Consolidated draft budget as considered and amended by the Chairs of Committees
- Guidance note on the budget
- Final reserves budget for 2021-2022.

[If large format copies of the budget are required, please apply to the office]

It is important, in order to focus on essentials and avoid irrelevancies, that Members read the above documents in detail and prepare any submissions in advance. To this end the guidance note sets out the underlying principles on which the budget has been based, any significant variances from the previous year, committee by committee, and the major points where discussion may be required. Please note the staff do not have ready access to the accounts data during the meeting, so queries about details need to be submitted in advance.

ACTION: to consider the consolidated draft and resolve on any points of uncertainty.

8&9. NOTICES, CORRESPONDENCE & CONSULTATIONS // ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

As per usual for an extra-ordinary meeting.

BUDGET 2022-23: CONSOLIDATED DRAFT : v.2 post Star Chamber

FINANCE & POLICY INCOME	TBC	notes
4176 Precept		
4177 Discretionary grant		
4180 Misc F&P income		0 none guaranteed (Maresfield hires discontinued)
4181 Wayleaves	5	
4182 Devolved services income	1450	public toilet scheme
4183 Community warden hire	11000	based on 2021-22 ave
4185 Other insurances rec'd	0	none guaranteed
4190 Interest received	55	based on 2021-22 ave
4380 Other grants/donations	0	none guaranteed
TOTAL F&P INCOME	12510	excl.precept & ringfenced carryover (= approx 95% of 2021-22 figure)

FINANCE & POLICY EXPENDITURE	notes
4100 Pension top-up	6000 based on mthly ave
4101 Salaries	345000 incl extra staff + 4% increase
4102 Payroll costs	420 unchanged
4103 Library salary	3285 advised this year only
4105 Comm.Services:development	
4108 Staff training & travel	3000 unchanged
4110 C/Warden expenses	500 unchanged
4111 Forest rate	25 unchanged
4120 Postage	500 based on mthly ave
4121 Telecommunications	7500 unchanged
4123 Stationery	800 based on mthly ave
4124 Subscriptions	6000 based on mthly ave
4125 Insurances	8000 unchanged
4126 Printer/copier	3500 based on mthly ave
4133 Chairmans Fund	680 current full sum
4134 Parish meeting/ event	500 likely this year
4135 Cllr training & travel	1000 unchanged
4136 Security checks (DBS)	150 unchanged
4137 Cllr allowances	6000 current full sum
4151 Bank charges	2000 includes card machine
4156 Legal & professional fees	5000 allows for SGA completion
4157 Audit/financial mgt	3500 allows for RBS increases
4158 Van lease	3000 pending disposal decision
4160 Office equipment	300 unchanged
4161 Office maintenance	700 unchanged
4165 Elections	1000 unchanged
4166 Wayleaves	25 unchanged
4169 Community event	500 unchanged
4360 Grants made	7000 unchanged
4361 FRSGA subsidy	2500 unchanged
7101 Advertising	0
7102 Website	650 site m'tce charge
7103 Awards	
7110 Newsletter	500 contingency
NEW: projected PWLB repayment	0 to reserves
TOTAL F&P	419535

(= approx 111% of 2021-2022 figure)

PROPERTY & ASSETS: INCOME	
3180 CC lettings	15000 assumes ± 80% pre-covid
3181 CC equipment hire	750 assumes ± 80% pre-covid
3182 CC rents	22000 assumes as per pre-covid
3185 CC misc income	400 assumes ± 80% pre-covid
3187 CC drinks machine	500 assumes ± 66% pre-covid
3188 CC grants & donations	0
3306 VolG income	4000 assumes ± 33% pre-covid

PROPERTY & ASSETS: EXPENDITURE	
2136 Bus shelters	0 no budget allowance - to be
1499 Benches	0 financed through CIL monies
1442 Litter bins	0
2551 Offsite car park	0 postponed this budget year
2553 Grit bins	0 no budget allowance - to be
6139 War memorial	0 financed through CIL monies
7108 Noticeboards	0

TOTAL P&A INCOME **42650**
 (= approx 141% of 2021-22 figure)

AMENITIES & SERVICES INCOME

1180 Allotment rents	1675 as last year
1280 VG hire	750
1281 VG utilities	100
6180 Burial fees	15000 estimate on prev yr
1400 Am'ts grants & donations	0 none guaranteed
TOTAL A&S INCOME	17525

(= approx 145% of 2021-22 figure)

COMM. SERVICES

2677 Car-club income	300 unchanged
2678 Medical transport income	0 unchanged
2679 Cycle-hire income	0 assumes R/C 'midwifed'
2905 Repair Café & Wellbeing	9000 assumes 10 mth of yr
3184 Market income	20000 unchanged
3480 Gages sales	400 unchanged
3680 Th. Club subscriptions	2500 assumes current numbers
2902 Life Stories project	
4676 Youth grants/subscriptions	
TOTAL C-S INCOME	32200

(= approx 108% of 2021-22 figure)

TOTAL INCOME (pre-precept): 104885 **TOTAL EXPENDITURE** 518885
SHORTFALL (pre-precept): 414000

(2021-22: total income: 86810/ total expend: 496905 / shortfall: 410095)

3111 CC rates & services	20000
3116 CC upkeep & cleaning	12000 allowing mtce contracts
3127 Drinks machine	500
3136 CC enhancement	3250 allow for essential repairs and upgrades only this year
3304 VotG non-youth equipment	500 replacement contingency
3305 VotG running costs	9500 estimate for full year
TOTAL P&A EXPENDITURE	45750

(= approx 84% of 2021-22 figure)

AMENITIES & SERVICES EXPENDITURE

1135 Allotment upkeep	1000
1236 Outdoor maintenance	5000 estimate on prev yr
1237 Outdoor planting	1000 incl. planned extras
1501 Outdoor equipment	2500 estimate on prev yr
1239 VG utilities	250 estimate on prev yr
1436 Skate & play areas	1000 repairs & m'tce
1447 Dog waste	3100 unchanged
2314 Streetlights - power	4000 allows for increased bills
2336 Streetlights	7500 estimate on prev yr
2436 Road safety	code t/f to Comm.Serv
6123 Cemetery admin	300 allows increase software cost
6151 Cemetery rates	700 estimate on prev yr
6152 Cemetery repairs	incl in 1236
TOTAL A&S (new codes)	26350

(= approx 97% of 2021-22 figure)

C/S EXPENDITURE

2554 Wealdlink	1000 assumes unchanged
2601 Medical car scheme	200 assumes unchanged
2602 Car-hire-club	
2605 Cycle-hire-running-seats	
2700 New service support	3000 renamed from R/C & wellbeing
3151 Market expenses	1300
3436 Gages equipment	1000 assumes unchanged
3460 Gages food	12000 assumes still 3x per week
3636 Thursday Club costs	1000 net of member contrib's
4603 Youth expenses	3500 net of grants
2436 Road safety	750 t/f from Amenities
New: Environmental support	3500 Star Chamber median figure
TOTAL C-S EXPENDITURE	27250

(= approx 117/130% of 2021-22)

GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET FOR 2022-2023

We have followed the same procedure for the revenue budget as in previous years, namely:

1. In September, all Members were invited to suggest items for inclusion or deletion. Some suggestions were received from the Community Services Committee.
2. Departmental drafts were then compiled, discussed at the next meeting of each Committee, amended if desired, and adopted by resolution.
3. An intensive meeting of Committee Chairs ('Star Chamber') took place on 21st December at which the adopted drafts were discussed, and some adjustments made.
4. A meeting of Full Council will be held on 11th January next for all Members to consider the adjusted draft, and the budget adoption and precept setting will take place on 18th January.

The following observations are offered in respect of the attached consolidated draft for 2022-23.

1. What is the overall aim of the budget for 2022-23? This has not been specifically discussed in Council, but there has been a good deal of tangential discussion, with feedback from both Members and several members of the public. This produced three alternative themes:
 - 1.1. We should aim for a 'steady state budget', with either no increase in the precept, or as little as possible, in recognition of the difficult economic situation of many people as a result of the pandemic. This would be at odds with virtually every other taxing authority, but the strength of the sentiment needs to be acknowledged.
 - 1.2. We should look to produce a 'post-covid budget' – reflecting our losses in income and the macro-economic inflationary increases in expenditure. In other words using the budget to redress the imbalances caused by the pandemic and restore our previous position, for which the precept is effectively our only means of so doing.
 - 1.3. We should actively consider an 'investment budget', looking to build in targeted investment to create post-pandemic growth for community benefit.There are viable arguments for all three alternatives, but they cannot all be achieved simultaneously. This is also, in view of the 2023 election, the last budget for which *this* Council will have to take full responsibility. It therefore seems appropriate to aim for a mid-ground, respecting the desire for a steady state, but with an eye to creating a financial context within which major improvements could proceed.
2. The departmental budgets yielded the following:
 - 2.1. Property & Assets has been significantly affected by the pandemic, due to loss of room hire income. It is now recovering, although the Committee decided to take a cautious view on lettings income. Overheads are generally unchanged, but the decision has been taken to save costs by deferring repairs to the Weirwood car park.
 - 2.2. Amenities & Services Income is forecast to grow by up to 45% over the current year due the increase in cemetery fees. The Committee also increased several items of expenditure, principally to allow for planned improvements and the rising cost of streetlight power.
 - 2.3. Community Services has undergone a number of changes, notably the 'midwifing' of the Repair Café, the acquisition of the road safety remit and the request to incorporate an 'environmental support' expense code. Committee suggested either £2,000 or £5,000 – but 'Star Chamber' decided on a compromise figure of £3,500.
 - 2.4. Finance & Policy's draft was calculated on the basis of only a slight increase for inflation on most overheads, and with one important exception (see 3. below) it was adopted without alteration. Forecast non-precept income is slightly but not significantly down over the

current year. Expenditure is up by 11%, mainly due to provision for increases in the salary bill in view of personnel changes and last year's freeze (topic to be debated in due course).

3. The main point of discussion is the provision for repayments for the projected PWLB loan:
 - 3.1. This was included (and voted for) in this year's budget in the expectation that during the financial year a £250,000 maximum PWLB loan would be applied for to finance the purchase of the old recycling site (£15,600 being the annual repayment figure).
 - 3.2. In fact, East Sussex rejected our bid for the site as a Community Asset Transfer and chose instead to accept the highest commercial bid. At present, that decision seems unlikely to be successfully appealed. However, there are several other capital projects discussed by Council and supported by community consultation, notably the purchase of additional cemetery land. These will still require PWLB financing, so provision for repayment still has to be included in the budget.
 - 3.3. If this is retained within the F&P revenue budget, the shortfall on the overall budget (and therefore the precept figure) would be approximately £430,000 – an increase of £15,000 (or 3.6%) on last year. Such an increase would be perfectly justifiable on the figures and in the current climate (where general inflation is already touching 5%), but would still mean an increased precept.
 - 3.4. It is, however, possible to achieve both objectives by a judicious use of reserves. The finalised reserves budget for this year benefited from savings made at the previous year end, making the general reserve £202,000 rather than the budgeted £180,000.
 - 3.5. If the PWLB repayment allocation is removed from the revenue budget and treated as a nominated reserve (to be called on as and when a decision is made about future borrowing), that new reserve can benefit from the surplus in general reserve, while reducing F&P expenditure by £15,600. The pre-precept shortfall will then reduce by the same amount, allowing for a precept of £415,000, the same as this year.
4. It is a matter for Council to decide. The full reserves budget can only be produced at the year end when the complete figures are finalised, but so far in the current year there have been no drawdowns from reserves, so the accompanying printout should hold good.
5. There is one extra item, which arrived after the initial drafts were issued. Should the Council have a stand-by generator for the Community Centre, and if so, how to fund its purchase?
 - 5.1. The issue came up in talks about the use of the Community Centre as a 'place of refuge' in a major emergency. It was pointed out that we currently have no back up in case of a total power failure, in a major emergency or otherwise, in a building where virtually everything depends on electricity. Initial research suggests that a suitable generator would cost about £13,000 to purchase and instal. Preliminary soundings suggest Council favours the idea.
 - 5.2. The simplest solution would be to add the prospective cost to the budget, either as a revenue item or as a nominated reserve under the assets heading. However, this would involve a *pro rata* increase in the precept.
 - 5.3. The following is suggested as an alternative. Take half the cost from the CIL account (which currently stands at approximately £10,000). Fund the remaining half by deducting from the current reserve for the cemetery extension (which stands to be substantially boosted by the proposed PWLB borrowing). This adjustment maintains the proposed precept at £415,000, and is therefore recommended to Council in line with the objectives already expressed.

**FRPC RESERVES FOR
2021-22**

	Required 2020-21	Actual 2020-21	Projected 2021-2022	Actual 2021-2022
General:	165,000	180,000	180,000	202,000
Nominated:				
Car club	2,500	2,500	0	n/a
Cycle hire	-	-		
Playground	15,000	18,000	20,000	20,000
Highway match	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Elections	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Cemetery land	25,000	28,000	30,000	30,000
CC refurb	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Vetg non-youth	-	-		n/a
Website	3,000	3,000	0	n/a
Devolved services	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
sub-total nominated	56,500	62,500	61,000	61,000
TOTAL	221,500	242,500	241,000	263,000

Notes: CIL monies carried over (currently £13,319) are additional to the above
 [There is also approximately £5,000 remaining of of a ring-fenced grant from 'Locality']