

Westhall Parish Council Responsible Financial Officer's Report 2017/18

The Parish Council's total income for the 2017/18 financial year was £3,586.08. As usual, the annual precept of £2572.00 was the major income component. The Council also received grants totalling £249.92, comprising a contribution of £150.00 from Suffolk County Councillor Tony Goldson's Locality Budget toward our purchase of high visibility jackets to support the Parish Council's Emergency Plan, and £99.92 from the SALC Transparency Fund toward the costs of hosting the PC's website for the years 2016/17 and 2017/18. The remaining income comprised a repayment of VAT incurred in the prior financial year, and payments from the charity "Recreation Ground" to reimburse the Parish Council for grass cutting and car park maintenance costs. The Parish Council also collected allotment rents on behalf of the charity "Recreation Ground".

In 2017/18 the Parish Council's total expenditure totalled £1,735.19, leaving a positive balance relative to income of £1,850.89 for the year. Included in the items of expenditure was an additional grit bin (£136.42) and a fee of £120.00 (levied for the first time this year) payable to BDO as auditors of the Parish Council's annual accounts: auditors' fees will henceforth form part of our annual expenditure. Other recurring items of expenditure were as budgeted, reflecting small increases in the insurance premium and subscription/membership costs. The annual costs of hiring the village hall for our meetings decreased from £150.00 to £120.00 owing to our change to a two-monthly meeting schedule.

As noted in last year's report, since July 2016 the role of Parish Clerk has been performed by Louise Studd on an unpaid basis (because Louise is also a Parish Councillor). This has changed with the appointment, effective 1 May 2018, of Ann Donnachie as our new Clerk, who will receive a salary of £1,086.00 per annum.

At the end of the financial year the Parish Council held cash at bank totalling £4,822.33. All but a nominal £1.00 of this is held in the Parish Council's Barclays current account. £1.00 remains in the Barclays business premium account. At present neither account is interest-bearing.

The precept for 2018/19 will again be fixed at £2572.00 – the same as the last two financial years. The Parish Council considers that the 2018/19 budget includes an appropriate cash reserve against ongoing and reasonably foreseeable additional expenses (including the salary of our new Clerk), plus a contingency fund. The latter is intended to accommodate any further devolution of existing responsibilities of Suffolk County Council and/or Waveney District Council: we remain of the view that, given the relatively modest size of our overall budget, it would be difficult for anything with material cost implications to be realistically devolved to the Parish Council.

Kevin Studd
Responsible Financial Officer, May 2018