

Risinghurst and Sandhills Parish Council

2021/22 Notes to Accompany the Budget

Risinghurst and Sandhills Parish Council wished to keep any precept increase to a minimum, in view of the hardship caused by the coronavirus pandemic during 2020. Therefore, the increase of 1.97% represents an annual increase of £0.71 pence per band D household. This may be slightly revised when the amount of special cemetery expenses charged by Oxford City Council is resolved.

The Parish Council has benefitted from several grants during 2021 related to the coronavirus response. Grants were received from Oxford City and Oxfordshire County ward Councillors to contribute to the refurbishment of Downside Dip play area, and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) sums were received as an outcome of small developments. These receipts are not included in the budget as they cannot be forecast at this stage. The National Savings and Investment Bank has reduced the interest rate to 0.01%.

Staffing costs increased during 2020. The Parish Council committed to being an "Oxford Living Wage" employer, and roles and salaries have been reviewed during the year which resulted in pay increases for the team. The role of the Parish Clerk has been increased to 25 hours a week, which includes the entitlement to join the local government pension scheme. This represents a substantial cost since the previous Parish Clerk had opted out of the scheme. A qualified Parish Clerk has been able to support the Parish Council to improve policies and procedure alongside helping to deliver projects and services for the community, and to seek external funding for larger projects which is proving to be good value for money.

Increased costs for the internal audit are a result of a fresh approach to the accounting and governance of the Parish Council, including a software package designed specifically for Parish Councils, although the ongoing support costs less than the previous software. Office costs have been reduced. Membership of two organisations provide support to the Council. The subscriptions for the SLCC (Society for Local Council Clerks) and OALC (Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils) have increased. These have been invaluable in giving legal advice and practical guidance during a year of upheaval due to the pandemic. They provide training from which staff and Councillors are benefitting, and their training costs have been reduced by using video conferencing.

The overall budget for maintaining the play areas and Risinghurst playing field remain similar, although they have been re-organised in the accounts. During 2020-21 phase 1 of a project to improve land drainage has been undertaken, and external funding is being sought for the next phase. A maintenance budget has been allocated for the ongoing improvement of the field. Lastly, the firework display is being planned for November 2021, in the optimistic hope that this popular community event will be able to take place safely.

Further information can be requested from the Parish Clerk.

e-mail: clerk@risinghurstandsandhills-pc.gov.uk

phone: 07717 134606