

Report on the Newstead Parish Council Accounts for 2015/2016

On the 1st April 2015, the Parish Council held total reserves of **£57,443** which included cash in all the accounts held by the Council. This figure is shown at the foot of the first column of the **Receipts and Payments Summary** attached with this report.

The second column shows the budget that was agreed in January 2015, whilst the third column represents the revised forecast for the year based on the figures presented up to 31st December 2015.

The final column in the summary shows the actual expenditure by the Council in the year ending 31st March 2016, where the amount remaining in the reserves has now increased to **£58,445** (more said later in the report).

Receipts

The **precept** for 2015/2016 was received as stated at **£14,652** from Gedling Borough Council along with Tax Support of **£3,886**

In terms of **Grants** received, the figure shown of **£2,105** relates to a grants received from Biffa of **£1,505**, representing the 2nd instalment due for work undertaken to Newstead Meadow, **£300** from Notts County Council towards improvements to the War Memorial and a further **£300** received for two new grit bins, which will need to be reimbursed to Highways once the new bins are installed in October 2016.

Cemetery and Other Areas - Receipts from cemetery fees are wholly in respect of charges made by the Council for interment fees, requests for headstones and pre-purchasing of plots. It is sufficient to advise that income from this source cannot ever be predicted and the number of burials in this year has been significantly lower than last year.

The VAT refund (£265) relates to VAT reclaimed from HMRC in April 2015 covering the previous financial year. All the VAT incurred on expenditure during 2015/16 was refunded to the Council by HMRC during April 2016 (i.e. after the end of the financial year) and are therefore not shown in the figures presented.

Other income - This income relates wholly to donations received towards the MUGA lights from Gedling Borough Council (**£2,100**), donations from the Ward Cllrs and also County Cllr Chris Barnfather (**£1,000**), together with a small donation from the Youth Club (**£63**) following a cake sale to raise funds for the lights.

Payments

Salaries – This figure is the amount paid by the Council in respect of the Clerk. The figure is marginally higher than that paid during the same period last year which includes the effects of a 1% increase in salary agreed in September 2015, backdated to July 2015, and an increase in the number of hours worked each week from 9 to 10, although some of these additional

costs were offset by lower pension contributions. The figure also includes the sum of **£208** for overtime worked between May to August 2015, and also a lump sum of **£247.50** to Notts County Council representing contributions required to meet the pension deficit identified at the last valuation.

Expenses – This amount includes the allowance agreed for the Chair of the Council based on **£15** per month, any travel or subsistence costs for the Clerk and Cllrs and includes reimbursement towards broadband charges, postage and other amounts claimed by the Clerk in terms of petty cash. Also included in this expenditure are training costs for new Cllrs (**£75**) and gifts, tokens and flowers for former members of the Council (**£99**), the cost of a new print head for the parish photocopier (**£39**) and a number of ink cartridges.

Stationery and office equipment – No large items of equipment have been purchased this year nor are any anticipated. Postage and small sundry items of stationery are included under expenses. The sum shown under this heading represents the cost of web hosting fees for the village web site for the next three years and paid in June 2015.

Cemeteries and Village Maintenance – This heading includes costs incurred so far on the grounds maintenance contract with Anthony Clarke (**£3920**) for strimming the village green, cemeteries and other areas as specified, burial fees charged by Mr Clarke as and when these services are required (**£1,730**). Also included under this heading are sundries paid to the lengthsman (**£69**) for paint; repairs to cemetery pump (**£372**); paint for the skate park (**£160**); and also paint for the play park equipment (**£117**)

Other costs incurred under this heading include new flagpole (**£500**); cost of re-setting a village seat and repairs to a notice board (**£180**); payment to the Probation Trust for strimming the Old Cemetery (**£84**); removal of fallen branch in the old cemetery (**£90**); a new grit bin (**£148**), and a top up for charges incurred by the lengthsman for painting the park (**£40**); the installation, redecoration and disposal of the Christmas Tree (**£359**), and the topping up of parish grit bins (**£54**).

Audit/Insurance and Subscriptions – Amounts spent under this heading include the cost of holding an internal audit (**£150**), external audit (**£200**) and insurance (**£615.74**). Subscriptions also include membership of N.A.L.C (**£189**). NB A substantial saving was made on insurance costs which were approximately £500 cheaper than paid in the previous year as a result of changing insurers.

Room Hire – This expenditure covers room hire costs incurred for meetings of the Parish Council from April 2015 through to end of March 2016.

Section 137/Donations – These are grants paid to other bodies that approach the Parish Council for funding and includes donation to the Newstead PCC towards the Summer Fayre (**£138**), Christmas Fayre (**£100**) and Easter Fayre (**£100**), **£250** to Newstead Events Group towards the Illuminate Newstead event and **£34** to British Legion Poppy Appeal. A further **£25** was also agreed towards the raffle prize at a Christmas Fayre organised by Deborah

Widdowson but this cost is included under 'expenses' and **£100** to the Newstead Centre in respect of a Christmas party for local residents.

Other Expenses – Includes Local Council Review (**£117**) and the cost of holding the elections in May 2015.

Capital Expenditure – Expenditure under this heading includes all expenditure relating to the extension to the cemetery car park (**£7,750**), plus the cost of removing tree stump (**£120**) from the same before work could be undertaken.

Other expenditure includes improvement works to the Newstead Meadow (**£2,180**), including the treatment of Japanese Knotweed where most of this expenditure will be reclaimed through the Biffa Grant. Also new street nameplate signs at **£236**; wildflower plugs purchased in May and planted in the Old Cemetery at a cost of **£118**; and finally a new road sign for Station Ave (**£103**).

It should also be noted that the Parish Council has also pledged £2k towards the MUGA lights, plus a further £1.1k in respect of matched funding/handling fees towards a drainage scheme for the skateboard park. These figures were included in the forecast for 2015/16, but have not been spent during this year.

Summary

When setting the precept for 2015/2016, the Parish Council chose to increase the precept by 4% in order to achieve a balanced budget. By far the biggest item of expenditure previously incurred by the Council was in respect of maintenance costs for cutting the grass in the cemeteries and the village green. However the cost of this work has now fallen where there is now increased competition to provide this service.

This year has seen the conclusion of the work undertaken on extending the cemetery car park. The revised forecast for last year assumed that most of this work would be undertaken during the first three months of this financial year when provision was made in the 2014/2015 forecast for anticipated expenditure of £8k. The final cost of this work has come within the amount originally allocated.

The cost of the Clerk's wages has also increased above that originally forecast in January 2015, but takes into consideration the increased number of hours that will be worked this year compared to last year and the additional pension contributions required as a result of the pension deficit identified in the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Overall the budget set in January 2015, assumed that by the end of the March 2016, the reserves of the Council would fall to **£49,833**, instead they have increased to **£58,445** including **£3,163** held towards the MUGA lights.

Approximately **£3.5k** has also been pledged to projects yet to come to fruition i.e. MUGA lights and improvements to the skate park, so uncommitted reserves stand around £52k. I

would also recommend the Parish Council retain at least a sum equivalent to the precept in the reserves, which gives the Council a ‘working’ reserve of approx **£37k**.

Previously, the Council wished to earmark the majority of these reserves to an extension of the existing cemetery, but it is likely that a substantial part of the reserves will now have to be used towards replacing the damaged wall around at the Old Cemetery. Regrettably at the time of writing this report, I am still awaiting an estimate for this work. Nevertheless the finances of the Council remain reasonably healthy and in January 2016, the Parish Council made a decision not to seek an increase in the precept collected.

Accordingly, I would now ask for Council’s approval of the 2015/2016 accounts as presented.

Signed

Jane Johnson

Responsible Financial Officer for Newstead Parish Council