

**Westbourne Parish Council, 11 March 2021****Agenda item 14: Payments for approval**

(DD: payment made by Direct Debit, IB: payment made by Internet Banking, C: cheque payment including number, PC: payment made by petty cash, \*movement of an earmarked reserve, \*\* paid from No 2 account)

<b>Payments for approval</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>Net</b>	<b>VAT</b>
EE&T Mobile Parish Council and				
DD	Westbourne Help lines	69.49	57.91	11.58
IB	WSCC LGPS March 21	452.37	452.37	0.00
IB	SSE streetlight electricity	72.04	68.62	3.42
IB	Confidential payments	1,373.33	0.00	0.00
IB	Jackson Planning Ltd (WNPSG)	342.00	285.00	57.00
IB	Microshade cloud storage	103.80	86.50	17.30
IB	MS 365	9.48	7.90	1.58
IB	Viking ink cartridges	56.99	47.49	9.50
IB	SSALC training (CK, RH, AP)	108.00	90.00	18.00
		<b>2,587.50</b>	<b>1,095.79</b>	<b>118.38</b>

**Payments for retrospective approval**

IB	Kompan playground inspections	324.00	270.00	54.00
Longmeadows clearing copse at Monk's				
IB	Hill	480.00	0.00	0.00
IB				
		<b>804.00</b>	<b>270.00</b>	<b>54.00</b>

**1. Treasurers account number 1**

<b>Balance per statement 28/02/21</b>	<b>152,852.23</b>
Less outstanding payments	0.00
Outstanding receipts	0.00
Add petty cash	0.00
<b>Revised bank</b>	<b>125,852.23</b>

**Cashbook control**

<b>Balance forward 01/04/20</b>	<b>133,972.03</b>
Add total receipts to date	118,521.25
Less total payments to date	99,678.05
<b>Cashbook at 28/08/21</b>	<b>152,815.23</b>

## **11 March 2021 Westbourne Parish Council**

### **Agenda item 15: Correspondence list**

- Report from Cllrs Hitchcock and Pearcey following attendance at a SSALC training course on local government finance.
- Report from Cllr Pearcey following attendance at a SSALC training course on engaging with young people.
- Presentation slides from a SSALC training course attended by the Clerk on developing an effective communications strategy.
- Emails from District Councillor Roy Briscoe about waste water issues - Southern Water and Environment Agency.
- Emails about the WSALC review of SSALC.
- Updates from CDC and WSCC regarding the Covid-19, vaccination programme and the delivery of services.

## SSALC – Local Government Finance for Councillors – 23/02/21

This brief report of the course, attended by Ann Pearcey and Richard Hitchcock + 16 others, focuses on aspects that it is thought will be of greatest interest/relevance to Westbourne Parish Councillors.

The session was led by Andy Beams, who has worked as a parish clerk and locum for many years and is now an internal auditor with Mulberry & Co, chartered accountants. He is WPC's internal auditor.

- Important documents: The Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Government Transparency Code 2015. Councils with an income/expenditure of between £25k and £200k are expected, though not obliged, to follow the latter.
- All expenditure exceeding £500 to be published at least quarterly (WPC publishes all expenditure monthly).
- Annual Report known as the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).
- We follow JPAG (Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance) guidance. See <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/our-work/jpag/3223-practitioners-guide-2020/file>
- Accounts are normally prepared on a receipts and payment (as opposed to an income and expenditure) basis if expenditure is less than £200k. As receipts and payment are only registered up until the time the accounts are prepared, figures can fluctuate somewhat and an accruals process is necessary at year end.
- Precept is based on the budget. In other words, the budget is set first and the precept flows from it. Not the other way round. The precept is paid in two instalments through the year.
- The present government appears to have no intention of applying the 'referendum principle' to town and parish councils. In other words, precepts are not capped. This is not the case with district, borough and county councils. If rates are capped in the future, it is likely that this will be phased in.
- Individual precept contributions (based on what Council Tax bands people fall into) are based on the Tax Base number, which is obtainable from the billing authority. The average precept increase in the UK this year is 4.0%. Higher in the south east.
- Parish councils have no legal power to hold reserves other than those for reasonable working capital requirements or specifically earmarked purposes, i.e. projects that are definitely going to be realised! These can be 10 years hence. General reserves (3-6 months net revenue or 50% of the precept, adjusted for local conditions – that is less than 50% for a large precept and greater than 50% for a small precept) held for unforeseen events. Budget surplus should go into the General Reserve, unless the council decides to put it into earmarked Reserve – this should be minuted.
- Fixed assets: Property, plant and equipment with a useful life of more than one year. Long term investments should also be recorded on the asset register. Validation of fixed assets is at acquisition cost or, if unknown, replacement cost. This is the case throughout the asset's life. Though it is perhaps counterintuitive, it is not appropriate to revalue or depreciate assets. As it is not possible to include assets on the register without a value, if the asset has been bequeathed/gifted, it should be given the value of £1. The threshold for including assets on the register may be set at, for example, £100, but gifted items with a proxy value of £1 should be included. Capital receipts from sale of assets must go back on the asset register and be used to purchase assets.

- Audit. Accounts subject to both an internal and external audit. For the former, PCs can choose whichever auditor they want. With regard to the latter, the auditor will usually only require sight of the AGAR (see above).
- Public Works Loan Board: This allows councils to borrow money for specific projects, as long as they have the power of competence, which WPC has. Further information is available from SSALC.
- Savings and investments: Seek advice first: the guidance is quite strict.
- Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) eligibility: If a council's budget is under £432k, as is ours, it is covered by the FSCS. However, if more than £85k is deposited with one bank, there is a risk (which is why WPC is looking to open a second account at a different bank).
- The bank reconciliation process confirms that funds held in the Council's bank account(s) match those held in the accounting system, allowing for any unrepresented cheques or unbanked amounts. Not an issue for WPC as we use internet banking.
- Discussions re finance don't always need to be at or towards the end of the agenda, by which time councillors are no longer so fresh!

## **Engaging with young people in the community**

Don't lump all age groups together within a community– there will be a variety of different views, ideas and priorities.

Young people have views other than “youth issues”.

Young people are a crucial group and part of our future. They are the councillors of the future.

Young people feel that they don't have a voice. Need to understand their experiences as well as needs. Covid has increased separation/dealing with future pandemics.

It's not so much apathy, but lack of understanding of councils. They need to know that funding is available.

Go into local schools – demystify councils. Use of social media – ‘did you know that.....?’

Build in all-year-round sustainable communication. Make consultations regular.

British Youth Council website has a lot of information. [British Youth Council | Home \(byc.org.uk\)](https://www.byc.org.uk)

How to engage – social media is not just a broadcast system, its about conversations. Answer questions, but don't enter into debates and respond in a factual way – try to build rapport. Challenges are logistical, and keeping it a positive space. Have a policy on trolling.

Test the water. ‘We want to know what you think....’

### **Practical ideas**

- Events in the community
- Consultations -creating events/activities/develop relationships with local youth groups/clubs/schools
- Schools – eg walking to school/environmental issues
- Get involved with local specific projects eg sunflower competition. Councillors can get involved and chat to the children
- Photographic competitions at school – award a prize
- On-line events/meet-ups/virtual events over Zoom – informal chats
- Use social media to micro-target. Ask facebook to target postcode/age within set budget.
- Consider Tik-Tok
- Don't spin too many plates
- Young people big users of Instagram and youtube (should be 13 or over to be on the platform.
- Whatsapp for business increasingly used by parish councils
- Inistagram has a high visual platform
- Use printed and digital surveys. Beware of setting expectations. Ask ‘ if you could improve just one thing....@ ‘wahts your visin for 10 years hence?’
- Don't assume knowledge. See Faversham Town Council NP Youth Survey – video explaining why they should do it.
- Put QR codes on printed newsletters or noticeboard signposting to survey
- Use surrogate to promote surveys amongst target audiences. Use a young person with passion. Peer-to-peer conversation is very effective. Billingshurst PC had a very good response to this video, appealing for young people to engage with the consultation.

See [Billingshurst Parish Council skate park survey - Bing video](#)

- Build a conversation with young people. Bi-annual or annual survey amongst youth-focussed community stakeholders. Ask schools to distribute a link
- Make a stakeholder list
- Actively involve young people – Short-term, tactical eg annual young persons' meeting – could be virtual. Have an action list, rather than an agenda and keep it informal. Long-term, strategic ideas – set up a Youth Council or arrange election of a Youth Mayor. Set up two-way strategic support for youth provision within the community. The PC could provide a budget if high level of involvement.
- Make use of work experience/youth apprentice schemes. Some councils commit to support an apprentice.











# **Building a Council Communications Strategy**

Training session handout produced  
by Breakthrough Communications

Find out more about how we can help your council at

**[www.breakthroughcomms.co.uk](http://www.breakthroughcomms.co.uk)**

or why not send an email to

**[hello@breakthroughcomms.co.uk](mailto:hello@breakthroughcomms.co.uk)**

## Good communication increasingly matter for parish and town councils of ALL sizes:

- Parish and town councils are increasingly seen as the 'go-to' council in their area
- As you take on more services, getting your council's message across AND building a sustainable conversation with your community has never been more important
- Residents rarely distinguish between different tiers of local government, so important we communicate what we do, how we do it and what others do

## A good communications strategy should:

- Actively support the council in **achieving its existing aims and objectives**
- Set out your council's **plan to communicate and engage** with your community
- Impacts how the council is **seen and heard**
- Supports **positive change in perception**
- **Bring Members and Officers together** in a shared vision of what success looks like

## Our eight steps to building a communications strategy

1. Agree the **purpose** of the strategy, what you're trying to achieve and the **approach** you will take
2. Review the council's **current and previous communications**
3. Use **SWOT** to analyse internal and external issues affecting your communications
4. Consider your council's objectives and develop **SMART communications objectives**
5. Consider your **messages for different audiences**, as well as **positioning and tone**
6. Consider **appropriate communication channels** for different messages and audiences
7. Put together a resource-appropriate plan of work to **implement the strategy** and consider key metrics
8. **Review, review, review**

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