



Stradbroke Parish Council

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4th December 2018



Sent via email

Dear 

Further to your letter dated 20th November 2018, most of the information you request is publicly available on the Parish Council website: <https://www.stradbrokepc.org/>

Policies, Procedures and Terms of Reference: <https://www.stradbrokepc.org/statutory-information>

Audited accounts:

<https://www.stradbrokepc.org/statutory-information> or <https://www.stradbrokepc.org/parish-council-archive>

Minutes:

<https://www.stradbrokepc.org/documents> or <https://www.stradbrokepc.org/parish-council-archive>

The minutes of the following meetings contain the information requested:

13th February 2017

8th January 2018

11th June 2018

14th August 2017

9th April 2018

9th July 2018

9th October 2017

14th May 2018

8th October 2018

The further information requested is as follows:

A. Internal Audit

The internal auditor made the following recommendation for the year ending 2017/18: *“the Council should consider increasing its general reserve and contingency sums to meet, within reason, any unforeseen items of expense that may occur”*. The Finance Committee discussed this at the budget setting meeting and will be making recommendations to the Parish Council on how to address this following a thorough review of the current reserved funds.

B. Rent review/Lease matters – Stradbroke Charitable Trust

The Parish Council approached the RICS to appoint an independent valuer to determine a proper rent level in accordance with the terms of the lease as there is a dispute.

The Finance Committee will be recommending that any increase in the rent, if so determined, should be vired to a Health Centre reserve account for use in connection with the Health Centre in the future. Once funds are ring fenced virements out can only be made with the approval of the Parish Council at a full Council meeting.

C. The answers to points numbered 1 – 6 are as follows:

1. See relevant page on website as referenced above.
2. See relevant page on website as referenced above.
3. The Parish Council will be reviewing the Grant Awarding Policy as it does all policies.
4. The payments mentioned were authorised at the meetings specified.

5. Clerking of the Neighbourhood Plan

This is separate to the Clerk's role as Proper Officer to the Parish Council. The Parish Council agreed that payment for Clerking the Neighbourhood Plan work would be vired from the Neighbourhood Plan reserve fund.

The Clerk does not need specific Parish Council permission to undertake work on Parish Council business; this is part of a contract of employment. The maintenance of the cemetery and the accurate recording of burials is a statutory duty for a Parish Council that has responsibility for a place for burials. In this instance, the Clerk has worked in her own time uploading the burial book onto a spreadsheet, however when issues have been identified, these have been resolved as part of the Clerk's contracted hours. Work on uploading the book has stopped at the present time due to other demands on the Clerk's time.

6. Half Year Accounts

These were fully reviewed and noted by the Parish Council. All expenditure figures are net of VAT; where VAT is reclaimable.

Ring fenced reserved funds

All Councils hold funds in reserve. They are set aside to cover the specific costs that may arise for work for which the funds have been reserved. The Parish Council's general reserves are kept to deal with any unexpected costs that may arise after the budget and precept is agreed and can be applied as needed.

External expert advice and opinion

This was unbudgeted as, at the time the budget was set, it was not known, or foreseeable, that it would be required and consequently it could not have been included in the budget. Approval to incur the expenditure is noted at the Parish Council meeting held on 9th April 2018.

Responses to the regulation 16 consultation carried out by Mid Suffolk on the Neighbourhood Plan would indicate that members of the public were aware of the decision, as this matter is referred to in representations made and submitted to the external examiner during May 2018.

Phone kiosk, noticeboard plus repair/resite gate

All of these were unexpected repairs which were unbudgeted. Funds were vired from the Maintenance Reserve fund to cover the costs; a contribution from the Community Centre was also received. The Parish Map was paid for using a locality grant from Cllr Flatman. This was received in 2017/18 and could not be included in the current year's budget. This grant was held in general reserves pending completion of the map.

Funding for the Neighbourhood Plan

This was reserved in previous years. Current spending is from reserved funds following Parish Council virement approval. This year's expenditure was unbudgeted as, at the time the budget was prepared, it was assumed the costs would have been invoiced prior to the year end. However, the project over ran, therefore the invoices were received after the financial year end. The Parish Council operates a basic income and expenditure accounts system which does not allow for accruals to be made at the year end.

D. Stradbroke Monthly

This has been under the scrutiny of the Stradbroke Monthly Governance Board since 2015, with its income earmarked by the Parish Council in a separate bank account from 2016.

Invoicing for the advertisements takes place during March for the start of the following financial year in April; therefore, historically, the income received does not always fall in the same financial year in which the expenditure is incurred. The Stradbroke Monthly is self-financing, with a small balance carried forward year on year, this enables printing to continue whilst all the advertising revenue is collected. During 2017 the decision was reached, with the support of the Parish Council, to establish a new bank account with Lloyds - the previous bank account incurred bank charges and the new one does not. All outstanding funds were transferred to the new bank account in February 2018.

The Parish Council's audited accounts show that the receipts for 2016/17 plus 2017/18 total £8,513.70. The payments for the same period also total £8,513.70. The payments in 2017/18 include the closing balance transferred to the new account - therefore it is unclear where the deficit mentioned is shown.

Any further queries concerning the Stradbroke Monthly can be directed to the Governance Board.

E. Neighbourhood Plan Reporting

During 2017, the Parish Council voted to convert the Neighbourhood Plan Committee to a working party reporting directly to the Parish Council. Minutes are on the Parish Council website. Extracts from the full Parish Council meeting minutes and other full Neighbourhood Plan committee/working party minutes and notes are also available on the Neighbourhood Plan pages of the website at (<https://www.stradbrokepc.org/committees-working-parties>). The minutes of the most recent meeting of the working party held on 29th November 2018 are not yet available. The previous meeting was held on 24th September 2018 and as the work undertaken was relevant to the PIIP, the minutes can be found on the Documents page of the website as previously referenced.

F. Terms of Reference for Committees – transparency

These are standard practice for all Councils. The Parish Council reviewed and introduced new documents, partly due to the fact that until July 2017 a number of Neighbourhood Plan meetings were held without proper notice being given, therefore contravening the Council's standing orders and possibly preventing the public from being aware that the meetings were taking place. Openness and Accountability are also why the Parish Council has set up a Finance Committee which met in public to set a budget. This budget will be proposed at the next full Parish Council meeting on 10th December.

As the information you are requesting is available on line, should you require any hard copies of the minutes, policies and accounts a charge of 10p per page will be levied, plus postage as per the Parish Council's Publication Scheme; a copy of which can be found on the Statutory Information page of the Parish Council's website.

Yours sincerely

O Wladon

Miss Odile Wladon

Clerk