

Marston Sicca Parish Council

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2019/20 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORT / FINANCIAL COMMENTS

1. Overview

Marston Sicca Parish Council saw an interesting year with land transfer from Bloor Homes finally concluded and S106 monies received.

The challenges of concluding land transfer from Lagan Homes continue with the site still requiring remedial work. The refusal by the Parish Council to accept revised plans (showing extensive wildflower meadow) was contentious and with the support of WCC and SDC (enforcing conditions) we may now see momentum to the work.

The addition of a large section of Meon Vale within Marston Sicca Parish encouraged greater vision for the residents within the development including those requiring extra support. With a view of facilitating the needs of residents who were keen to utilise the allotments (many were unable to commit singularly to large pitches on the site) the Parish Council entered into negotiations with the site developer/owner St Modwen. The aim being to change lease terms in favour of Marston Sicca PC to be the sole tenant. This would allow greater flexibility for the residents including shared pitches or community projects including the church and local school. A grant was approved by the Parish Council to help make the site fit for purpose which was supported by 50% share from WCC grant.

Continued effort was placed on Highways to prepare cost effective, viable speed calming measures with an adjustment to original plans due to the high cost submitted by WCC (significantly higher than the funds available from S106). Modified plans remain with Highways and we await their cost projections. The reserves for Speed Calming - £20K has further S106 monies at our disposal but were significantly below the estimated costs initially submitted by Highways.

As part of continuing review of costs, the parish council tendered the newsletter operation to two printing companies along with an opportunity for the incumbent provider to present their comments. With a view of enhancing publications with a consideration of costs, the Parish Council selected a new provider who offered best options with an annual saving of £1000.

The continuing development of the Neighbourhood Plan was somewhat hindered by the lack of resident participation. Without increased support there will be insufficient resource to manage the various sectors of the plan. Circumstances have been made evident with the hope it will bring greater enthusiasm.

2.Finance

The healthy bank balance encouraged greater focus on the open space (once legal transfer with Lagan Homes is finalised) and how it may serve the Long Marston community and the diverse needs of its residents. The council created a working party to specifically concentrate on the open space with a view of preparing ideas of use with associated costings for resident's perusal.

End of year financial position was healthy and within budget. Securing grass cutting refund from SDC helps the maintenance spend and a full review of options for the newsletter revealed cost savings.

£106 monies were significant and will mean a change in auditing criteria (unable to apply the Exemption Certificate).

To mitigate risk, the RFO in accordance with councillor instructions opened a savings bank account within the Nationwide Building Society, we were unable to finally conclude the account and with bank mandates due to exceptional circumstances arising in March. Formalities have since been finalised and monies ready to be transferred. The Nationwide Bank account will be used for savings only with HSBC continuing to be used as the main working bank account for both savings and day to day activity. Nationwide will continue to work under same controls as HSBC (three signatures per cheque).

EXTRAORDINARY INCOME:

- 1) £94,500 from Bloor Homes (£106 monies)
- 2) £250 Grant from NFU (bench replacement)
- 3) £2000 donation from a resident as a contribution towards road repairs to Wyre Lane.
- 4) £5000 from Severn Trent towards remedial work to Wyre Lane

There were no extraordinary expenses during the current financial year

Debbie Woodliffe. Clerk/RFO