

## **END OF YEAR FINANCIAL REPORT 2020-21**

Lewknor Parish Council (LPC) ends the year slightly down on the same time last year but still with a healthy level of reserves, though it must be remembered that a large proportion of this (nearly £39k) is CIL funds, earmarked for special projects and not for everyday expenditure.

The year has, of course, been dominated by the global COVID-19 pandemic. LPC has managed to continue with its monthly meetings uninterrupted by holding them virtually (via Zoom). So most of the business of the parish council has continued, except for the Annual Parish Meeting which had to be cancelled because of COVID restrictions.

The pandemic meant that LPC also had to move over to online banking (instead of manually signed cheques). This process, which took months to set up, is now working well with payments set up by the Clerk/RFO and then approved online by two councillors and overseen by LPC's finance councillor who has view only access.

While most expenditure in the budget have come out at roughly as planned, there were some that did not:

- The cost of getting the parish's dog waste bins emptied has risen sharply. SODC suddenly announced in April 2020 (days after it had been introduced) a massive rise in their fees for this service. So, like many other parish councils, has LPC moved to a private contractor. While their fees are lower than SODC's new charges, the costs are significantly higher than previous SODC fees and what LPC had budgeted for.

- The amount spent on the Clerk's pay has risen, firstly, because of an hourly pay rise approved by councillors and in line with NALC recommendations. And, secondly, because of the overtime and holiday pay paid in April for last year. It should be noted that the same will happen this April and the amount will be significantly higher. This is due to extra work required because of: the pandemic and lockdown (e.g. vast quantities of documents and instructions to be read and disseminated), many hours needed to set up online banking; and LPC's move to a new website (to comply with new accessibility laws) and a new (government) email address. However, LPC was given £400 compensation from Lloyds Bank for delays which will offset all the overtime and some of the recompense for outstanding leave.

- Sundry Expenses have gone over because of a bill for a traffic survey dating back to 2019 which was only presented to LPC in February 2021.

Expenditure on grasscutting has been less than budgeted; however, as always, this is a very difficult one to predict as it's mainly down to the weather how many cuts are needed.

More than £2,500 has been spent on the Neighbourhood Plan which was not listed in the proposed budget. This is because LPC was already holding grant funds for the NP.

In spite of the pandemic, a couple of the CIL projects have been carried out: a new path has been constructed into the village hall playground and five new benches have been installed around the parish (with the help of an OCC grant).

The parish council has begun a project to replace the old parish noticeboards; LPC has a new one on order for Lewknor village with plans to refurbish the other two. (The payment for these will not happen until 2021-22 financial year). Grants from SODC and OCC are contributing two thirds of the cost of this project. (LPC hopes to replace the other two in the not too distant future).

It's hoped that the pandemic will be brought under control sufficiently to allow the other major projects (traffic calming and playground upgrade) to go ahead in 2021.

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Clerk/RFO

7<sup>th</sup> April 2021