

BARNTON PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk's Office
68 Lydyett Lane,
Barnton,
Northwich,
Cheshire,
CW8. 4JT.
4th January 2010

Telephone 01606 76468
E. Mail. crgarton@aol.com

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL.

I herewith attach my budget statement for the financial year 2010/2011 and statement of accounts to the 31st December 2009 for Members to take into consideration when deciding the Precept for the next Financial Year.

This will be my 12th and penultimate Budget Statement and this year due to the various demands on the Parish Precept and the current economic climate plus the Local Government Reorganisation that has taken place make this is probably the most difficult budget that I will ever have to produce. It is also possible that future budgets may be dealt with differently and it is quite clear to me that at some time in the future the provision of some Local Services may be devolved to larger Parish Councils in certain circumstances. The transition which will be necessary to go from employing 5 part time staff to employing perhaps full time staff and being responsible for a range of services which we do not provide now is a major step for Barnton Parish Council to take.

I cannot predict what changes will be necessary to do this but it is almost certain that the Parish Council will need to have a an office where the Clerk woks and the the days of the Part Time Clerk working from home are undoubtedly numbered. I have prepared a report entitled "The Clerk - A Way Forward" in which I have indicated to Members that I intend to retire from the position of Clerk to the Parish Council on the 6th April 2011 and I have therefore built into this Budget the provision of employing my successor from 7th January 2011 subject to the Approval of the Parish Council. Not withstanding all the possible changes that can or will take place in 2010/ 2011 I have again had to base my budget along traditional lines as I have done previous years.

I have provided you with a Financial Statement of Accounts at the 31st December 2009 however I have been only able to estimate very roughly the Recreation Ground Expenditure which again is due to the number of major/minor jobs being done by the Contractor Mr. John Hughes and other Expenditure such as a second survey of Runcorn Road Recreation Ground, etc., As these Invoices may not be presented by the end of the Financial Year it will be necessary to carry over the funds that are left to ensure I can pay the invoices when they are presented. There are sufficient funds in my opinion left to pay these invoices with the funds remaining in the budget..

I have recommended a Precept of £76,000 and my reasons for doing so are set out in the explanation alongside each item and in the other documents which I have provided. This year is particularly difficult due to the economic climate and the impending changes being made by Local Government over which we have very little control and we are also entering uncharted waters in trying to borrow significant funds to buy additional land for Allotments. I would therefore strongly recommend that Members of the Parish Council seriously consider the implications of increasing the Budget until such time as we clearly know what the future holds for us and have put in place the infrastructure to be able to deal with it.

I would also add the following further information which Members may wish to take into consideration when deciding what amount to set the Precept at for 2010/2011.

BURIAL JOINT COMMITTEE. The Burial Joint Committee have indicated that they require a Precept of £4120 for 2010/2011. Our contribution to this Precept is 90.5% or £3728.60. The remainder 9.5% or £391.40 is paid by Anderton with Marbury Parish Council. The reason for this was explained more fully in the submission made by the Burial Joint Committee and presented to the Parish Council at our November Meetings. This is an increase of £120 over 2009/10. We have had to authorise additional funding of the Burial Joint Committee of £2000 just recently if it was needed due to cash flow problems. I have carried over a similar sum (£2000) within this budget for any cash flow problems in 2010/2011, should they be needed. (See also the item in the conclusions section below) I also have not as I have been requested by the Burial Joint Committee Committee added the extra £10,000 to my Budget which they recommended as an additional earmarked sum for a possible future Land Purchase

SECTION 137 PAYMENTS. (DONATIONS) I have allowed £2500 for Donations which is the same as last year and takes into account the request for funding received from Barnton Youth Football Club. (£2000). There is also £500 available for requests for Donations from Good Causes and Members will have to decide how much to grant to each request (normally £50.00 in 2009/2010)

AUDITORS FEES. The Auditors Fees for auditing the accounts in 2008/09 are £520.00 as in 2008/09 however we have still not been able to appoint an internal Auditor for 2009/10 (recommendations will be made to the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 11th January 2010) to appoint a New Internal Auditor. We will not be able to appoint an Internal Auditor for anything like the previous cost and I anticipate that the New Internal Auditor may cost as much as £500 per annum therefore for 2010/11 I consider that this £250 increase should be sufficient to pay the appointed Internal Auditor and External Auditor in the Financial Year 2010/11

PETTY CASH. I have allowed £1000 for Petty Cash in 2010/2011. Petty Cash will be restricted to paying for Minor Consumables, Staff Allowances and Members and Staff Mileage Claims as in 2009/10.

INSURANCE. Our Insurance was changed in 2008/09 from Allianz to Norwich Union under a 3 year fixed scheme (subject to no claims being made) at a rate of £3100 per annum. This is the last year of the 3 Year Scheme. We actually paid in 2009/10 the sum of £3072. 12 I have allowed again £3200.00 which should be adequate to renew our Insurance policy for 2010/2011.

MEMORIAL HALL. The Hall Management Committee have provided a statement of expenditure to support the request for £7000 in the Precept for 2009/2010 which is the same as last year. I consider that continued support for the Hall Management Committee is still essential and the figure of £7000 has been agreed by the Grants Committee of the Parish Council and has been included in the budget. The Parish Council are permitted under Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to fund Village Halls and whilst there is no limit to the amount we can give these funds must be used to maintain or improve the Village Hall or in support of its running expenses.

SALARIES. I have allowed £23,000 in the budget for Salaries in 2010/11. This is an increase of £8000 over the previous year. My salary will increase in accordance with the recommendations made by the Barnton Parish Council Task Group Meeting of 10th April 2008. My Salary in 2010/2011 will be £11458 which includes Working from Home (Heat and Light), Depreciation of Computer Equipment and Employers National Insurance Contributions. I have allowed for the Deputy Clerk/Minute Secretary's salary of £2676 per annum made up at 18 hours per month @ £10.45 per hour plus £418 per annum for his own computer equipment depreciation. I have allowed £1575 to pay for the Salary of Mrs Jeffs our Tunnel Top and Website Editor (15 hours per month @ £8.75 per hour) this is an increase of 3 Hours per month because of an increased workload Distributing Tunnel Top (due to Mr. Casey's illness) and additional Work on the Website installing additional information sent by myself under the Freedom of Information Act . This increase will have to be agreed by the Finance and General Purposes Committee at the Meeting on Monday 22nd February 2010. I have allowed £140 for Mrs Hearsey to maintain Jubilee Corner (1 hour per week for 18 Weeks @ £7.70 per hour) The Park Warden and Assistant Park Warden are employed at the Hourly Rate of £6.25 per hour and the Salary in 2010//2011 at this rate will be £3725 which includes an early morning inspection every day (1 hour) of Nursery Road (April to September) and an afternoon inspection every weekend and afternoon inspection during week days in the School Holidays plus 5 x 1 hourly inspections on 5 separate days on Nursery Road Recreation Ground in the Winter Months (October to March) and an inspection twice a week (2 hours) on Runcorn Road Recreation Ground throughout the year. It is occasionally necessary especially on Nursery Road to pay 2 hours on some occasions due to amount of use and detritus left by the users. The total Salaries paid to employees at this rate is £19434.00 per annum. However it is my intention to retire as the Clerk on 6th April 2011 and it will be necessary to consider paying a new Clerk to run alongside me for three months. I have therefore added an additional sum of £2866 to pay my successor. There are therefore sufficient funds in this grand total of £23,000 to pay all Salaries (as existing) plus Allowances, Income Tax and National Insurance in the next Financial Year I have allowed an extra £700 to pay for any additional hours or if Members agree to pay increments in salaries when the pay and hours of Staff are reviewed at the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 22nd February 2010.

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE. I have allocated £2850 in the budget for this item which includes the quotation of £2490 given by our Contractor (2nd Year of a 3 year Agreement) This allows for the following work to be carried out. All grass cutting on fourteen occasions and the strimming of all boundary fence lines, and around trees and around all play equipment / benches etc. on six occasions on both Recreation Grounds and hedge cutting on one occasion during the winter months on both the Recreation Grounds and on Barnton Football Ground Townfield Lane. I have also allowed a further £360 for minor additional works

MISCELLANEOUS EXPENDITURE. I have allowed £2050.00 to pay for the following items; Room Hire for Meetings (£500) Subscriptions (£100) other Minor Miscellaneous Items such as Members Training Courses, Members Travelling Allowances, etc. (£200) and printing of 6 editions of Tunnel Top (£1250)

STREET FURNITURE AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS. I have added this as a separate budget item and have allocated £4000.00 for this in the 2010/2011 budget. As I have shown in my Financial Predictions in the Statement of Accounts to 31st March 2010 a surplus of £5000 has been added to the 2010/2011 Budget and I have allocated £4000 of this sum to this budget vote primarily to allow for improvements to Village Streetscene such as planting of Bulbs & Trees and additional Street Furniture such as Litter Bins, Seats, Planters, Bollards, Notice Boards and the tidying up and planting of Flower Beds on the Green spaces and their ongoing maintenance, etc. Much of this Budget Vote will be spent on items which have been indicated as necessary by the Parish Plan Implementation Group (See also item below)

RECREATION GROUNDS. I have allocated £8000 in budget for the Recreation Grounds in 2009/10 I have allowed for Maintenance of the Skateboard Park (£600.00) The Collection of Litter and Emptying of the Litter Bins (£2000) and the Monthly Safety Inspections (£600) . Maintenance of the existing Play Equipment , Minor Renewals and Repairs plus any minor additional works (£2000) Payment of Electricity and Water Bills (£300) and a sum of £2500 to carry out any specified additional works by the Parish Council especially to the Wild Garden on Nursery Road.

BARNTON MAD YOUTH CLUB. (SECTION 137 PAYMENTS) I have placed £10000 in the budget to support the MAD Youth Club which is an increase of £2000 over last year. The Youth Club have provided the Parish Council details of their Income and Expenditure and the Grants Committee have agreed this sum which I have allocated to the Budget as requested

(The total of Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 funds that I have included in this Budget is £12500. The actual amount we are permitted to spend in 2010/2011 is 4397 (No. of Electors) x £5.64 per Elector = £24799.08.)

ADMINISTRATION AND STATIONERY. I have allowed £1200 for this item which includes Stationery (£400) and also a further £800 to pay for IT Equipment for our new Clerk if necessary

POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER. I have included £11800 which will pay the salary required of our Police Community Support Officer in 2010/2011. I have assumed that the Parish Council will eventually sign the new Service Level Agreement with the Cheshire Police Authority.

VALE ROYAL PLAYScheme. It has been agreed that we do not participate in this Playscheme during 2010 and following the Recommendation of the Grants Committee and confirmation by Full Council. I have accordingly allocated no funds to this.

BARNTON PARISH PLAN IMPLEMENTATION GROUP. I have not been able to recommend that any funds be allocated to the Barnton Parish Plan Implementation Group specifically (although no doubt items included in the Street Furniture and Other Improvements section above which has been allocated £4000 will include many of the items they have recommended the Parish Council take action on) for the following reasons. The Barnton Parish Plan Implementation Group produced a Document entitled "Requests for Support " at the Annual Parish Assembly in May 2009 and were told that as no funding for their Group had been specifically allocated in the 2009/2010 Budget the Parish Council could not further their request at this time. To enable the Parish Council to ascertain their financial requirements a standard letter was sent to the Group in September 2009 asking what funding they required, if any, to be considered for inclusion in the 2010/2011 Parish Council Budget. A further 8 page Document entitled "Funding Proposal" was produced on the evening of the Meeting of the Parish Council Grants Committee (9th November 2009) without any explanation of its contents by the Group. Both these documents, whilst undoubtedly having considerable merit in their proposals are in many instances unfortunately either beyond the remit and/or the financial scope of the Parish Council to pursue and the latter document whilst itemising what funding was required for certain proposals appeared to be a request for the Parish Precept to be earmarked as match funding (This would not be allowed) for the Barnton Parish Plan Implementation Group. Both Documents differ in the proposals that have been put forward. by the Group. They also in many instances will require, if implemented, considerable additional funds from this Parish Council Budget (and from future budgets as well) for which I have made no provision. I have therefore reluctantly been unable to allocate a specific sum to the Group because they have not made a request for a specific amount of funding in a way which the Parish Council and myself as the Responsible Financial Officer can reasonably be expected to determine and ask that we include this amount in the Parish Council Budget . To give but one example concerning funding, the Barnton Christmas Lights Festival (not mentioned in the request for funding in the latter document) was cancelled at short notice in November 2009 and when I asked Pastor Webb if he wanted £1000 put into the budget for next year for the Barnton Christmas Lights Festival he then replied that £2000 to £2500 would be better. I have not considered any provision therefore for the Barnton Christmas Lights Festival in 2010 either. Members will therefore have to decide whether to make any allocation of funds to the Parish Plan Implementation Group (including the proposed Barnton Christmas Lights Festival) in the Budget of 2010/2011 and where this funding comes from by either increasing my recommended precept or by reducing the funding I have advised in the various budget votes accordingly. Care must also be taken in allocating any sum within the Budget to ensure that all the additional costs can be adequately met in the total as many of the proposals in the Parish Plan Implementation will have significant additional costs to the Parish Council as I have already stated and I have made no provision for this within my budget for 2010/2011.

CONCLUSION.

I have shown in my statement of accounts that I predict we will have £9900 of surplus funds available at the end of the Financial year and I have recommend £5000 of this be allocated to the Budget and spent in 2010/11 for use primarily of the of the Street Furniture and other Improvements Vote. This will allow the Parish Council to spend in 2010/11 approximately £81,000. Of the remaining £4900 a sum of £2000 is being held should the Burial Joint Committee run into cash flow problems during 2010/11 and the remainder £2900 will suffice as a balance carried over to pay any invoices and cover unclaimed Value added Tax till we receive the Precept from the Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Members are of course fully entitled to agree or disagree with any item in the budget and can vary or remove funds allocated to any budget item or add funds to provide for any item for which I have not allocated anything.

Members must however be specific and itemise any changes that they wish to make and these must be recorded and voted on accordingly. Any funds allocated in the Precept must be specific as to what they are for and the Precept cannot be increased for speculative items or because we just might like to have more money to spend on something. Members can of course increase the amount of the Precept if they wish to do so and you can of course, if the funds are not spent for the allocated purpose in the 2010/2011 budget, they can be reallocated to pay for other items or to reduce the precept in future years or be carried over to spend in the next year's budget on items at the sole discretion of the Council. What you also must remember we cannot once the Precept Requirement has been set we cannot later in the year ask for additional funds and must work within our Budget and my role as the Responsible Financial Officer is to ensure that we do so.

The Parish Council Budgetary Requirements is through our power to Precept and added to the Council Tax for our Parish Area. The Parish Council Tax is calculated by dividing the Precept we request by the estimated Tax Base for our Parish Area. The Tax Base for Barnton Parish has been calculated as 1815 Band "D" equivalent properties. A precept of £76000 represents approximately £41.87p per Band "D" Property per annum. The £3000 increase I have recommended over the Precept for 2009/10 is an increase of approximately £1.65p per Band "D" property per annum

I recommend to Members of the Parish Council that a precept for 2010/2011 of £76000 which is an increase of £3000 over the Precept set for 2009/2010 which is an increase of 4% in the overall total and this is in my opinion in the current difficult economic climate is a reasonable and prudent amount.

Yours faithfully,

C. R. Garton
Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer