

Minutes of the “virtual” meeting of the Westbere Parish Council held on TUESDAY 28 APRIL 2020 at 6pm.

Background to this first “virtual” meeting:

Regulations enabling town and parish councils to lawfully conduct virtual meetings by video and telephone conferencing until May 2021 have been published. The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 came into force on 4 April. The legislation allows for virtual meetings if required up to May 2021.

This meeting was held using Microsoft Teams as a virtual hosting platform. Agendas were posted on the village noticeboards as usual and also to the parish council's website. This clearly explained that members of the public are still able “attend” a parish council meeting either online or by telephone but to do so will need to contact the Clerk for details of the meeting link or phone number and the PIN code for access to enter.

Present: Parish Councillors: Tom Hopkins (Chairman), Stephen Laws, Sylvia Harlow, Karen Williams, Maria Morcom and Kathy Wilson.
Clerk to the Council, Amanda Sparkes.
No residents.

1. The Chairman's opening remarks and apologies for absence

Cllr Hopkins welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the law had changed to enable the meeting to be held ‘virtually’. All councillors were attending the meeting by video conference. The Clerk confirmed that no members of the public had asked for the PIN to join in. Apologies for absence were received from KCC Cllr Alan Marsh and belated apologies were received from Canterbury City Councillor Georgina Glover.

2. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Cllr Hopkins proposed, Cllr Harlow seconded and all councillors agreed that the Minutes of the last meeting held 17 March 2020 were a true record of the meeting. (NOTED that these will be signed by the Chairman at a later meeting when meetings are able to resume in person.)

4. Annual Electors Meeting

The previous date of 27 April 2020 was cancelled due to coronavirus restrictions on gatherings. The parish council intends to reschedule this later in the year when meetings in person and gatherings may take place again, ideally prior to Christmas.

In the meantime, Cllr Hopkins will prepare his annual Chairman's report and this will be put on the parish council's website and also in the next newsletter. The Clerk explained that she has received the Westbere Charities report and annual accounts and this could be uploaded to the parish council website.

5. The Village Green Party

The Village Green Party scheduled for Sunday 5 July is also therefore under review, and subject to the ease of lockdown and future distancing restrictions.

6. S101 delegation of powers

The Scheme of Delegation (s101 of the 1972 LGA), provides for delegating authority to the clerk for making decisions on behalf of the council as and when appropriate. KALC has said that it is important that Local Councils ensure that they have an adequate Section 101 1972 LGA delegated authority in place. S101 requires formally agreed Terms of Reference by the Council. Decisions would then require the input of 2 members. It needs to be based in Terms of Reference (a sheet of A4 rules – see Scheme of Delegation below) that sets out the key themes of the delegation and the financial thresholds that apply.

KALC has recommended that the Terms of Reference should be broad and the financial thresholds on the generous side that reflect the likely demands e.g. £1k per item or project and stipulate the input of at

least 2 senior members. This model sees the Clerk taking on the executive role; whilst the Council, if and when it can meet, becomes more strategic in outlook around policy.

Cllr Hopkins proposed and Cllr Wilson seconded and all councillors indicated that they agreed that a S101 delegation of power to the Clerk be resolved, with the Terms of Reference detailed below, and with the input of the Chairman if available plus one other councillors, but with the authority of a minimum of two councillors, and the Clerk copying all councillors by email.

Delegation of Power

To the Proper Officer and Responsible Finance Officer LGA 1972 s101

The Council's Scheme of Delegation authorises the Clerk to the Council/Responsible Finance Officer to act with delegated authority in the specific circumstances detailed:

- **To take action:**
- To take action on any issue that cannot wait until the next Parish Council meeting.
- The Clerk will address any need/resolution to all councillors by email.
- Action taken should routinely be done with the input of at least two councillors, including the Chairman if available.
- If circumstances do not permit the input of at least two councillors, the Clerk would normally be expected to consult the Chairman or Vice Chairman if the Chairman is unavailable and take his/her view into account.
- **Financial thresholds:**
- To authorise expenditure on items where the Council within a budget approved by the Council has agreed the expenditure.
- To incur expenditure on behalf of the Council, which is necessary to carry out any repair, replacement or other work or essential project which is of such extreme urgency that it must be done at once, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £1,000.00
- To take any action regarding minor repairs (up to a cost of £1,000.00) and to report minor matters to the relevant authority.
- **Record keeping**
- Record keeping and the maintenance of a solid trail (particularly around decision making in any form) should be retained in writing and reviewed and certified to ensure good documentary evidence. This is particularly important in the case of an s101 delegated authority.

Delegated actions shall be in accordance with Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and in line with directions given by Council from time to time and this Scheme of Delegation, and where applicable any other rules/regulations and legislation,

- and
- **Reporting back to full council**
- shall be reported to the next available Council meeting.

7. Chairman's Report and Councillors' Reports

Cllr Tom Hopkins - Cllr Hopkins commented that there was fantastic work going on in the village, with not much call for support from the volunteer scheme now in place.

He recorded thanks to Lisa Laws for the friendly and helpful emails she has sent, and also to the Yew Tree pub for their delivery box service. Other than that, he commented that it had been a quiet period since the last meeting.

Cllr Karen Williams - Cllr Williams explained that she had been walking the village and keeping an eye on the village hall as well as Cllr Wilson.

Cllr Sylvia Harlow – Cllr Harlow explained she had looked at the new application for the Westbere Butts and drafted a response. She recorded thanks to Cllr Wilson who has been doing many things.

Cllr Stephen Laws – Cllr Laws explained that he had helped finalise the parish council's response to the current Future of Concurrent Function funding.

He has also drafted a reply to two objections received from two of the four landowners of the Two Fields site at Staines Hill. This is yet to be finalised and he asked the Clerk to do some research on the number of households in Westbere and part of Sturry.

Cllr Maria Morcom - Cllr Maria Morcom explained she had reported some street lights permanently on to the Clerk who has since reported them.

A possible candidate to fill the parish councillor vacancy was approached but the resident did not feel that she was in a position currently to take this up.

Cllr Morcom explained that she had had a chat with Anna about how the Yew Tree is supporting the community and Anna is very happy to share the following information:

"The pub did a leaflet drop a few weeks ago, offering £5 and £10 grocery boxes to the parish and to some of their regulars who live just into Sturry.

They asked for dietary requirements to tailor the boxes to meet people's needs.

They have offered this as a community service and describe it as a not-for-profit activity.

The response has been very good. People are excited to see what's in the weekly goodie box!

This is Week 4.

15-20 households have ordered the boxes. Of those households about half are people who live alone. People can collect their boxes or ask for them to be delivered. Many parishioners have volunteered to deliver to help their neighbours.

Some of their regulars have offered help with procuring groceries if needed, for example eggs and flour. This is a way of helping the community through the hub of the pub.

Some people have noticed that the new people in Church Lane are advertising eggs for sale at 10p each or 50p for half-a-dozen."

Cllr Kathy Wilson – Cllr Wilson advised that she has been walking the village, and is pleased to see social distancing. She has not been going to the Police Station to do neighbourhood watch reports. She has been checking the village hall, and the committee has had some more sockets put in at the back end of the room for the WVPS.

8. Reports from County and City Councillors

Canterbury City Councillor Cllr Georgina Glover

CCC Cllr Glover sent the following belated report:

"I have just completed our first practise Planning Meeting and apologise for not replying before as we had no idea of how long this would take. I have a new chrome book from CCC and it has very little uploaded on it at present and cannot undertake a live meeting with you, which is very disappointing. I can do so on our home lap top.

We have also had a practise Policy & Resources meeting but run as a Full Council Meeting. I believe from comments that we are a little late in starting but all of the members had differing technology problems as I did as my lap top was 9 years old and not working to the correct link ups."

9. Adjournment of the meeting for parishioners' questions and comments

As there were no residents present there was no adjournment. The meeting continued.

10. Planning

CCC Planning meetings: Four weekly, on Tuesdays at 6.30pm: previously scheduled for 28 April, 26 May 2020. CCC is making provision for virtual planning meetings to take place during coronavirus restrictions and that public access and public speaker provision is also being taken into account.

Writeup/letter regarding the CDLP witness session held on 28 February 2020

TO NOTE that a letter was sent on 31 March 2020 to Karen Britton, head of planning policy, and to the two officers in attendance at the 28 February 2020 session, Andrew Thompson and Steve Musk. This letter thanked them for the opportunity and advised that the notes are a record of the notes WPC has of the meeting. The letter was also copied to city cllrs Cllr Georgina Glover and Cllr Louise Harvey-Quirke.

A28 Link Road - KCC/CA/0091/2019 - Construction of part of a new road (A28 Link Road) including viaduct between A28 Sturry Road and A291 Sturry Hill and associated on-line improvements. A28 Sturry Link Road, Sturry, Canterbury.

The Case Officer: Helen Edwards at KCC. View documents at:

<https://www.kentplanningapplications.co.uk/Planning/Display/KCC/CA/0091/2019>

On 3 July 2019, Cllr Harlow and the Clerk met and discussed this proposal with a Sturry Parish Cllr and a Sturry resident. There are several shared concerns. The application will be determined by Kent County Council's Planning Committee. CCC has been a statutory consultee. The Case Officer shared the response with the Clerk – CCC is fully supportive of the application and proposal in order for the relief road to mitigate the effects of the two large strategic housing applications CA17/01383/OUT (Sturry) and CA/18/00868/FOS (Broad Oak).

These two housing applications and the KCC link road application are intrinsically linked together.

CCC Cllr Louise Harvey-Quirke rang the Clerk on 17 April 2020 to advise that the coronavirus restrictions have meant that the applications have not been able to be heard by the planning committee and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) funding of £6m towards the link road construction is at risk as the funding is due to run out in May. (The rest of the required is coming from KCC for the bridge construction and through developer contributions). Canterbury City Council's CEX is writing to SELEP to request another extension.

Village Green status application to KCC for the Two Fields site

NOTED that the Sturry and Westbere Two Fields Action Group submitted an application for the Two Fields to be designated a Village Green to KCC at County Hall on 08 November 2019. Over 70 residents of Westbere and Sturry submitted Evidence Questionnaires along with their memories of using the fields and photographs.

At the end of the public consultation period the officer forwarded The Two Fields Action Group copies of the objections she has received. The only objections were from Bellway and another landowner. There is now the opportunity to respond to their objections. Due to the COVID-19 circumstances, an extension to her deadline of 8 May was requested and she agreed to extend the deadline to 19 June 2020.

New applications:

CA/20/00419 - Rose Cottage, 9 Church Lane, Westbere, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 0HA, Proposed use of garage and store as ancillary accommodation, together with external alterations including insertion of rooflights, windows, doors and cedar cladding to garage, and bi-folding glazed doors to front elevation of store.

The parish council had no comments on this application.

CA/20/00761 - Spice Master, Island Road, East Of Staines Hill, Sturry, CT2 0EZ Proposed 10 no. detached two-storey dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping.

Comments are due on or before 15 May 2020. The parish council is working on a draft response. The parish council has access and speed of traffic concerns. The response will also request a condition that if CCC is minded to grant the application that there be no contractor parking in Pennington Close during construction - the developer should make alternative provision on site.

This led to some discussion about the problems of parked cars near the entrance to Pennington Close. The possibility of exploring a residents' permits parking scheme for Pennington Close could be pursued in the future.

Notifications:

CA/20/00419 - Rose Cottage, 9 Church Lane, Westbere, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 0HA, Proposed use of garage and store as ancillary accommodation, together with external alterations including insertion of rooflights, windows, doors and cedar cladding to garage, and bi-folding glazed doors to front elevation of store. GRANTED by CCC

11. Financial matters

- i) The Finance Schedule is to be initialled by the Chairman of the meeting and returned to the Clerk by post.
- ii) The cheque payments are being dealt with by post to two councillor signatories during the coronavirus pandemic.
- iii) When meetings are able to be resumed in person - TO RECEIVE the bank statements and bank reconciliation for March and April 2020, and TO RESOLVE the signature of a councillor other than the Chairman thereon;
- iv) NOTED that on 26 November 2019 the Clerk dealt with an advertiser enquiry who signed up for a one-off advert in the January edition of the parish council newsletter and will pay £18.00. Payment was not forthcoming and was chased twice. The advert has therefore been cancelled.
- v) NOTED that the annual insurance renewal is now due. The parish council is still in a long term agreement with Zurich Municipal. The Clerk will adjust the Fixed Asset Register figures with the annual insurance uplift values.
- vi) The tree works to the village green tree to shorten the main limb has still not been undertaken. The Clerk explained that she instructed the contractor at the same time as instructions for the Churchyards work which has been undertaken (although the invoice for that is awaited). She has chased and will chase again and if necessary, seek fresh quotes from other contractors to get the work done.

The future of Concurrent Function Funding

Canterbury City Council is considering future options for concurrent functions for 2021-2022 onwards. An Options paper was to go to the Rural Forum on 23 March 2020 but this was cancelled due to the coronavirus. This paper recommends that CCC consult with parish councils on three options:

Option 1 – to reduce the concurrent function funding to zero over a four-year period.

Option 2 – to reduce the concurrent function funding to zero over a two-year period.

Option 3 – to reduce the funding to zero with effect from 1 April 2021.

TO NOTE that a written response to the Options Consultation was ratified by email by Cllrs and sent to CCC on 11 April 2020. This response is appended to these Minutes as a public record.

Capital grant application for 2019-2020

The parish council received a CCC capital grant for £ 577 for a backless bench seat to be provided on the site of the removed telephone box on Staines Hill. A minimum of 42% match-funding was required for the balance from the parish council. The backless bench production and delivery costs were £480 excluding VAT. The bench was installed by a Kent Highways approved contractor on 19 March 2020 for £600. So the grant was £577 and the parish council's match funding amount is £503 (47% of total costs). NOTED that the Clerk provided evidence of spend to CCC on 07 April 2020.

Capital grant application for 2020-2021

Councillors resolved that a capital project for the CCC Parish Council Capital Grant scheme 2020-2021 should be an application for the planting of a mature replacement tree on the green to become the feature tree when the Cherry tree finally needs total removal. An application was made with total project costs of £550 for the supply of a 10-12 foot mature Cherry tree and protective cage.

CCC's Community Committee resolved to fund all projects at 72.5% uplifted by the individual parish council's score over the average score. Westbere Parish Council has now been paid a grant of £241.58 in April 2020. This project will progress later in the year.

Concurrent Function Monitoring for 2019-2020

NOTED that on 20 April 2020, the Clerk dealt with the relevant CCC Officer with regard to documents that need to be returned to Canterbury City Council for CFF Funding, as per schedule 2 of the CFF Funding Agreement.

- Spend on CFF in 2019-2020 was £3,365.00
- The award in 2019-2020 was £4,108.92 so there is an apparent underspend of £743.92 but tree works were undertaken in 2019-2020 in the two Churchyards and the invoice for this is awaited, and expected to be £755. It has had its production delayed by coronavirus. As the parish council operates a Payments and Receipts style expenditure reporting this will now lodge in financial year 2020-2021 despite the work being done in 2019-2020.

The Clerk sent copies of:

- the Annual Return form of full accounts for 2019-2020;
- A spreadsheet detailing the CFF spend for each item giving the total spend of £3,365.00;
- a copy of the Ear Marked reserves schedule for year ended 31 March 2020 (tbc) showing the CFF award as a separate line, and
- Copies of the parish council's Insurance schedule and PLI Certificate.

The Clerk confirmed that Westbere Parish Council has no play areas, no COSHH risk assessments; and no interaction with children and young people directly, so no safeguarding documentation.

12. Clerk Report

Coronavirus – response to the crisis by Westbere Parish Council

After receiving the latest issue of Gale's Views, on 21 March 2020 Cllr Stephen Laws wrote to Councillor Kup who was compiling a register of local councils offering residents support schemes.

During late March 2020 Westbere Parish Council circulated leaflets to all residents of the parish asking who is willing to volunteer to assist neighbours in the current situation, and inviting anyone in need of assistance to let us know. The parish council is working closely with the Westbere Village Preservation Society. The contact point is Cllr Kathy Wilson 079069 093 715 kathrynwilson365@gmail.com

NOTED that KALC and NALC also asked for examples of parish initiatives and the above information was also shared with both bodies on 23 March 2020.

Kent libraries closed from 20 March 2020

Under the exceptional circumstances caused by COVID-19, KCC implemented the following temporary changes:

- All 99 libraries were closed to the public, including the mobile library service, from 20 March 2020 until further notice.
- All loan periods are extended for all customers until the end of June. If you need further extensions after June, please let the library know via email: libraries@kent.gov.uk or call 03000 41 31 31.
- If you have reservations, or reservations on order, they will be kept safe until KCC re-opens libraries. Once they re-open, they will be available for 10 days before going back into circulation. If you cannot collect the reservation during that time KCC will refund you the reservation fee or re-order it at no additional charge.
- Remember digital collections are always available. These include reference resources as well as free e-books, e-audio books, a vast range of the latest e-magazines and daily e-newspapers. These can be accessed at kent.gov.uk/lib
- The Ask a Kent Librarian Service will remain available on 03000 41 64 38, email akl@kent.gov.uk or via 24/7 chat at www.kent.gov.uk/askakentlibrarian

13. Network Rail response to Freedom of Information request regarding the lengthening works to platforms at Sandwich train station

9 April 2020

Dear Ms Sparkes

Information request Reference number: FOI2020/00408

Thank you for your email of 11 March 2020, in which you requested the following information:

Request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 regarding Sandwich train station platform lengthening and station improvements

Westbere Parish Council understand that the 149th Open will be played at Royal St George's Golf Club in Sandwich from 12 to 19 July 2020. In advance of this event Network Rail is enhancing passenger capacity at the Sandwich station to improve the experience for the thousands of spectators expected to be travelling by train:

- o Network Rail is extending both platforms at the 'Dover end' of Sandwich station by 80 metres so they can fully accommodate the 12-carriage trains that will operate during The Open. This also means that the 12-carriage trains calling at Sandwich will not straddle the level crossing causing less disruption to local traffic.

o A new stepped footbridge will be added to provide a link between the extended platforms along with a new walkway from the extension on platform one. This will provide spectators with a more segregated and direct route towards Royal St George's Golf Club which avoids local roads and streets.

- A new entrance is also being created on platform one to assist with the movement of spectators to and from the station. The work is expected to speed up the time it takes to reach the golf course while keeping regular passengers and spectators attending the Open separate to ease passenger congestion at Sandwich station.

I can confirm that we hold some of the information you requested. I will address each of your questions in turn.

1. What is the total cost of the work improvements?

I can confirm that, at the time of your request, we do not hold the total cost of the improvement works taking place at Sandwich Station. To explain, the work is currently ongoing and while we hold cost estimates, until the project is completed, we will not hold a record of the total final cost. The works are due to complete around June 2020; a few months after that point we will be in a better position to hold final costing information. I would encourage you to come back to us later in the year by which time the information might be available.

2. Who is paying?

The improvement works at Sandwich Station are being paid for by both Kent County Council and Network Rail.

3. Where did the funding come from?

The funding has come from both Network Rail and Kent County Council. While we are aware that Kent County Council have received funds from third parties towards this project, we do not hold recorded information that demonstrates who has contributed to their share of the funding.

4. What is the full scope of the work?

The full scope of work is set out below and is currently in progress:

- Network Rail is extending both platforms at the 'Dover end' of Sandwich station by 80 metres so they can fully accommodate the 12-carriage trains that will operate during The Open. This also means that the 12-carriage trains calling at Sandwich will not straddle the level crossing causing less disruption to local traffic
- A new stepped footbridge will be added to provide a link between the extended platforms.
- A new walkway from the extension on platform one. This will provide spectators with a more segregated and direct route towards Royal St George's Golf Club which avoids local roads and streets.
- A new entrance is also being created on platform one to assist with the movement of spectators to and from the station. The work is expected to speed up the time it takes to reach the golf course while keeping regular passengers and spectators attending the Open separate to ease passenger congestion at Sandwich station.

5. Were feasibility studies undertaken?

In direct answer to your question, I can confirm that we did undertake the required feasibility studies, which is standard practice for works of this nature.

6. Has it involved the moving of signals?

Again, in direct answer to your question, I can confirm that the project has not required the movement of signals for these works to take place.

Cllr Hopkins explained that he had done some research around rail billing schemes. Crucially the scheme at Sandwich station did not involve the moving of signals.
However, for lengthening platforms at the Sturry station:

- One platform (for trains heading in the Thanet direction) has no signal so from Cllr Hopkins research he felt the costs to lengthen would be in the region of £150k.
- The other platform (for trains travelling in the Canterbury direction) does have a signal which would need moving and which would mean that the next one to it would be quite close and so the position of that one would also need adjusting. And, in fact, any lengthening of that platform could mean 3 or even 4 signals might need adjusting. This could potentially then be a multi-million pound project.

It was agreed that the Freedom of Information request would be followed up later in the year and ask about the final costing information when hopefully Network Rail will have this information to hand. The Clerk will also forward this information to KCC Cllr Alan Marsh for both his information and to ask questions about the KCC funding mentioned and if he is able to find out any information.

14. Next virtual meeting

It was agreed to hold the next meeting, again virtually on Microsoft Teams platform on Tuesday 26 May 2020 at 6pm.

15. Close of meeting

Cllr Hopkins gave thanks to everyone.
The meeting closed at 7.05pm.

SOURCES OF ADVICE

The coronavirus situation is fast-moving and there is an increasing amount of misinformation online.

The **government's main source of advice on coronavirus** includes information on the social distancing alongside a wide range of other information. This is at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

- If you would like to keep up-to-date with the government information as it comes out then you can **sign up to their Covid-19 response bulletin** at <https://www.gov.uk/email-signup?link=/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>
- **Public Health England (PHE)** has FAQs that will be updated regularly at <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/>

Contacts

If you are self-isolating, you could contact one of these organisations for help and support:

Age UK 0800 678 1602

Asthma UK 0300 222 5800

BHF 0300 330 3311

Diabetes UK 0345 123 2399

Mind 0300 123 3393

Scope 0808 800 3333

The Silver Line 0800 470 8090

Appendix - Concurrent Functions Funding consultation

TO NOTE that a written response to the Options Consultation was ratified by email by Cllrs and sent to CCC on 11 April 2020 as follows:

1. Which parish council do you represent?

[Westbere Parish Council](#)

2. Are you...? Please tick one box only

☐ Parish Council Chairman

☐ Parish Councillor

☐ Parish Clerk

☐ Other, please state: [Response from the parish council as a whole ratified by email](#)

Budget

Canterbury City Council is proposing to reduce the total Concurrent Functions Funding budget over time, with a view to removing it completely in the future.

We are proposing 3 options for how this could be implemented, details of which are included in the consultation document.

3. **Taking everything into account, which option do you prefer?** Please tick one box only

- ☒ **Option 1:** Reduce the budget over a four-year period from 2021/22 to 2024/25, to £0 from 2025/26 onwards. A flat rate reduction would be made to parish council applications agreed for 2020/21
- ☐ **Option 2:** Reduce the budget over a two-year period between 2021/22 and 2022/23, to £0 from 2023/24 onwards. Funding would be allocated according to prioritisation of need via an application process
- ☐ **Option 3:** Reduce the budget to £0 from 2021/22 onwards
- ☐ Neither
- ☐ Don't know

3a. **Why? Please include details of how you think each option would impact your parish**

Obviously, we would prefer Option 1 to reduce the funding over a four-year period – this would minimise the impact on our residents' council tax bill increases by a stepped up increase.

However why is there no Option 4 for Members to consider/support – to retain the funding at the same level - to avoid further double taxation on rural residents?

At the Stakeholder event held on 27 February 2020 the parish councillors and clerks urged CCC to undertake a 'value for money' exercise, whereby Serco quotes for grounds maintenance of some of the recreation grounds and their figures be compared to that being paid by the relevant parish council. This will establish whether parishes utilising their own (often local) contractors are giving value for money. /continues....

Has this been done? If not, we urge officers to do this in order to fully inform the city councillors at committee when the decision on the future of concurrent funding is determined.

Or an Option 5 – to bring in a "Special Expenses Scheme". The CCC paper says that should the city councillors decide to proceed with the reduction in concurrent funding that officers would explore a Special Expenses Scheme. Surely that exploratory work should be done in parallel now in order to inform the city councillors decision? See below in Q7 about how it is unclear what form such a scheme might take and whether and (if so how) it would in fact mitigate each of the proposed options.

Details of how you think each option would impact your parish:

Westbere Parish Council precept for 2020-2021 is £14,423.

Westbere Parish Council concurrent funding award for 2020-2021 is £4,094.47.

Option 1: Reduce over four years:

To add the £4,094.47 CFF figure to the precept from 2021-2022 over a four year period would increase the precept by just over 7% in year one and by comparable, albeit slightly smaller, percentages in years 2, 3 and 4.

Option 2: Reduce over two years:

To add the £4,094.47 CFF figure to the precept over two years:

To add 50% a £2,047.50 increase to the precept for 2021-2022 would increase the precept by 14.25% and by 12.5% in 2022-2023.

Option 3: To remove funding completely:

To add the £4,094.47 CFF figure to the precept for 2021-2022 would increase the precept by 34%.

The percentage increases for all three options are significant – and assume that the parish council does not have any other aspirations that may require additional precept provision.

We appreciate that our parish council is not the worst affected in the Canterbury district should the total of the concurrent function award be transferred to the precept. Two of the parish councils in the district would face a 59% increase under Option 3.

However, our latest budget for the current year 2020-2021 required a precept raise of just over 20% in order to achieve a balanced budget. Even Option 1, imposing a 7% further increase on residents year on year for four years will be unacceptable to parish residents - and will make the role of parish councillor in a small community unpalatable. .

4. **If option 2 was implemented, what criteria do you think the city council should use to assess funding requirements according to prioritisation of need? Please tick all that apply**

- ☐ **Yes** - Prioritising according to safety requirements, please specify what these should include:

We suggest the following would be required for reimbursement for health and safety reasons:

- i) The annual ROSPA play area inspections fees (for those parishes that have play equipment – Westbere does not)
- ii) Insurance
- iii) Fencing repairs if for safety reasons
- iv) Tree works for health and safety reasons (although it is difficult to predict a figure in advance)

- ☐ **Yes** - Prioritising funding for parishes where Concurrent Functions Funding accounts for a greater proportion of their overall costs
- ☐ Other, please state with reasons why:

- i) **We believe that all parish councils spend more on concurrent items than the amount they receive reimbursement for. We urge officers to study the parish councils' overall spend on concurrent functions versus their actual award – and put together a table showing (i) the award (ii) the actual spend (iii) the shortfall figure and then (iv) the percentage for what the shortfall is against the award. This should then be given to the city councillors to inform their decision on the future of concurrent funding.**
- ii) The proportion of expenditure on concurrent is only an indirect, and potentially imperfect, way of identifying the extent of the impact of the proposed change on the level of precept. If there is to be prioritisation, it should be applied directly to that factor – subject to the following paragraph:
- iii) *The parish council reserves figure should not be taken into account – this would penalise those parishes that have been prudent in the past – and the reserves have been built up through taxation of residents in previous years. Support for parishes with lower levels of reserves (which have possibly failed to build a sensible level of reserves) should not be at the expense of the taxpayers in parishes that have behaved responsibly by building up reserves for use for the benefit of their own parishes.*

5. **Do you have any alternative proposals or suggestions for how the city council could reduce the Concurrent Functions Funding budget? If so, please provide details:**

- 1. Ensure that all parishes are reimbursed (pro-rata or otherwise against available budget) for the same number of general amenity cuts for grass cutting – the previous four-year award capped the number of cuts to 18 – but not all parishes asked for reimbursement of that number. There are parishes currently claiming for less – so those parishes claiming for more cuts could have their figures adjusted downwards to ensure equality.

2. In our parish maintenance of the closed burial ground is subsidised by volunteers – with for example volunteer litter picking and weeding events – This means that the amount of maintenance / number of cuts in the parish is minimised.
Does this happen in the urban areas?

Parcels of land owned by Canterbury City Council

Please only answer Questions 6 and 6a if you are responding on behalf of one of the following parish councils:

- Harbledown and Rough Common
- Herne and Broomfield
- Hersden
- Petham
- Sturry

If you are responding on behalf of any other parish council, please go to Question 7.

Canterbury City Council is proposing to incorporate the maintenance of parcels of land which it owns into its own grounds maintenance contract from April 2021. They would be maintained at general amenity levels.

6. **To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?** Please tick one box only

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Strongly agree | ☐ Tend to disagree |
| ☐ Tend to agree | ☐ Strongly disagree |
| ☐ Neither agree nor disagree | ☐ Don't know |

6a. **Why? Please include any restrictions which may affect the city council's ability to do this as part of your response (for example, contracts already entered into, etc):**

Question 6 and 6a is not applicable to Westbere Parish Council

Double taxation

7. **Do you have any comments regarding double taxation, or any suggestions as to how this could be overcome? If so, please provide details:**

Double taxation already exists:

There is already a shortfall in funding received versus the provision being undertaken, with this shortfall being met through double taxation.

It is suggested that a Special Expenses Scheme would alleviate double taxation. The CCC paper says that should the city councillors decide to proceed with the reduction in concurrent funding that officers would explore a Special Expenses Scheme. Surely, that exploratory work should be done in parallel now in order to inform the city councillors decision? Also, it is very unclear how such a scheme would produce any real practical benefit or relief for the parishes. That needs to be clearly explained before its adoption could be agreed.

Contingency Fund

8. **To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Contingency Fund should continue to be made available?**

- | | |
|---|--|
| x ☒ Strongly agree | ☐ Tend to disagree |
| ☐ Tend to agree | ☐ Strongly disagree |
| ☐ Neither agree nor disagree | ☐ Don't know |

8a. **Why?**

Westbere Parish Council consider the Contingency Fund to be an essential backstop. By definition unexpected expenses can be large and outside planned agreed budgets. Because of this they will, therefore, obviously have a serious impact on and be detrimental to a small parish.

Westbere Councillors also believe that the reserves figure should not be taken into account as this would directly penalise parishes that have been prudent in the past. These reserves have been built up over time through taxation of residents in previous years. Why should residents, therefore, be penalised in order to support parishes with lower reserves who may have been less prudent?

9. Do you have any other comments on the Concurrent Functions Funding scheme?

1. The total Concurrent Function Funding budget is £134,500.
This represents just 0.09% of CCC's total income of £153,092,000 for the year ending 31 March 2019.
And the total Concurrent Function pot as part of the total CCC expenditure of £159,118,000 for the year ending 31 March 2019 is just 0.085%.
2. No room for service level reduction:
The previous four-year funding agreement already caps parish councils service levels to that of the CCC service levels – i.e. bus shelters are capped at a flat rate of £140 per shelter, and the number of grass cuts is capped by CCC to 18 general amenity cuts per year. Westbere Parish Council undertakes and has asked for reimbursement of 12 cuts for its open spaces and closed burial grounds – so there is little room for service provision reduction to minimise the loss of concurrent funding award, meaning that any loss of funding will have to be raised on the precept.
3. Other external pressures increasing parish precepts:
This proposed removal of concurrent function reimbursement should not be looked at in isolation. There has already been a significant impact on most parish councils' precepts with KCC EiS removing their previous free website hosting support.
4. Referendum Principles for Parish and Town Councils:
The DCLG has scrutinised parish council precept increases since 2016 and expects parish councils to exercise restraint when setting precept increases. Whilst they have not been minded to apply Referendum Principles to parish and town councils yet, this position could change. If this were to be the case from 2021-2022, some of the parish councils in Canterbury could be affected and be subject to (an expensive) referendum in order to raise the money necessary to carry out concurrent functions. This would also impact on their ability to raise funds and to be able to make other improvements in the parish.
In the last month there has been the publication of headline **council tax levels set by local authorities in 2020/21**
(https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/council-tax-levels-set-by-local-authorities-in-england-2020-to-2021?utm_source=Members&utm_campaign=875dc172d3-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_06_08_03_15_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_206970988f-875dc172d3-323662309&mc_cid=875dc172d3&mc_eid=0e190acd20)

Essentially the average increase across England is 3.9%, the smallest since 2016/17; and

The average local precepting authority increase is 4.0%, the smallest since 2015/16.
5. Parishes precept budget setting timetable:
CCC impose a deadline in December each year for the parish councils to provide their following year precept requirement.
By law the precept budget decision must go to a full meeting of the council to be ratified.
CCC's decision on the future of concurrent funding must therefore be made and known to enable parishes to prepare their budgets in November at the latest.
6. Administration costs:
A final point of note is that there are administration costs in dealing with contractors, their maintenance schedules, work instructions and invoices etc that are carried out by clerks and councillors – and no reimbursement of this time is built in to the concurrent function award.
7. If CCC resolves to decrease funding or remove it all together may the parish councils please have a statement from CCC to share with all residents to explain the inevitable precept increase this action will impose on them.