



Sutton-at-Hone & Hawley Parish Council

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www.suttonathoneandhawleyparishcouncil.gov.uk

Minutes of the Sutton-at-Hone & Hawley Parish Council BUDGET Meeting

Thursday 18th December 2025 at 5.30pm in the Library, Main Road, Sutton-at-Hone

REMINDER TO ATTENDEES

The Chairman reminded everyone in attendance and participating of the following: "Subject to our Standing Orders you may be filmed, recorded, photographed or otherwise reported about. If anyone objects, could you please sit at the back of the room and anybody filming, recording, photographing or otherwise reporting on the proceedings should avoid those who are sitting at the back, except if they take part in a public participation session."

PRESENT:

Cllr K White (Vice Chair chairing the meeting until Cllr E Youell arrived) E Youell White (arrived at 6pm), Cllr L Newitt, Cllr K White, Cllr B White, Cllr G Holt

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Kirsty Lane - Clerk & RFO
0 members of the public

1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public present.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Cllr D Smith, Cllr H Siegenberg, Cllr A Jessett and Cllr E Connor
RESOLVED: Reasons noted and approved.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

Cllr B White, Cllr K White and Cllr L Newitt declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Football club.
Cllr G Holt declared a non-pecuniary interest in Borough Council-related matters.

4. TO DISCUSS THE BUDGET SPREADSHEET INCLUDING SPEND-TO-DATE AND BUDGETED FORECASTED SPEND TO THE END OF THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR – AND TO AGREE ITEMS STILL TO BE INCLUDED IN THIS YEAR'S EXPENDITURE BEFORE END MARCH 2026)

The Budget Report, showing forecasted expenditure to the end of the current financial year and proposed budget figures for the next financial year, had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting. The Clerk outlined the overall financial position and explained that VAT refunds were supporting the balancing of the current year's budget; however, this could not be relied upon in future years. As a result, it was noted that the precept would need to increase in line with rising costs.

The Clerk then guided Councillors through the proposed expenditure to the end of the current financial year, which includes all standard and committed spending. Key budget items were highlighted as follows:

- **Legal Fees (Hawley Pavilion lease issues, Land Registry, etc.)** – £7,000. It was **RESOLVED** that any unspent funds at the end of March would be earmarked for future legal costs.
- **IT and Website** – £1,570, covering the new website set-up and additional equipment following a DSE assessment.
- **Burial Repairs** – £1,000, to include new information boards in the burial ground, bench repairs, and repairs to the windows at the Sexton's Hut.
- **Parsonage Pavilion – General Maintenance** – £1,600, including shower repairs, removal of asbestos-containing materials, and boiler servicing.
- **Health & Safety Upgrades** – £4,900, covering EICR remedial works, emergency lighting, fire extinguishers, and associated equipment.
- **Parsonage River** – a new budget line, with £2,000 forecast for both income (under grants) and expenditure, resulting in no net financial impact.
- **Playground Repairs** – £1,000, to address urgent repairs required at Jubilee Field.

It was also noted that the forecasted income includes a VAT refund of £30,000. The Clerk advised that confirmation of this refund was expected by the January meeting. If received, the anticipated VAT refund for the 2024–2025 financial year would be larger than currently showing on the budget report and is estimated to be approximately £20,000, which would be received in the following financial year.

5. TO DISCUSS PROPOSED FIGURES FOR 2026-2027, IN CONJUNCTION WITH FUTURE PLANS. CONSIDER LARGER PROJECTS AND THEIR POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PROPOSED BUDGET FIGURES, PLUS NEW BUDGET LINES/SIGNIFICANT SPENDING

The proposed budget for the next financial year was considered, and the following significant items were discussed:

- **Grass Cutting** – £18,000. The Clerk advised that efforts are being made to reduce grass-cutting costs to £18,000, with a reduction in winter cuts identified as a potential option.
- **Tree Survey and Tree Works** – £5,000.
- **Health & Safety Upgrades** – £6,000, including the installation of a fixed fire alarm at Parsonage Pavilion.
- **Water Tank Roof and Building Repairs** – £5,000.
- **Hawley Pavilion Parking Bollards** – £3,000.
- **Parsonage River Works** – £2,000.
- **Parsonage Allotments Fencing** – £2,000.
- **Playground Upgrades** – £20,000. It was noted that this item is dependent on securing grant funding; if funding is not awarded, the corresponding income and expenditure will be removed from the budget.

The following actions were agreed:

ACTION: To confirm whether a tree survey has previously been carried out at Parsonage and the Burial Ground.

ACTION: Clerk to investigate grant funding opportunities for the playground project.

Challenges relating to Parsonage Pavilion were also discussed. It was agreed that, by the time of next year's budget setting meeting, the Parish Council should have a clear and defined plan for the future of Parsonage Pavilion.

6. TO REVIEW STAFF COSTS FOR 2026-2027

The staffing costs were reviewed and noted by members.

7. TO REVIEW CIL FUNDS AND PROPOSED CIL EXPENDITURE

There is £6,004.55 in earmarked CIL funds. The clerk outlined some of the projects that CIL can be spent on. It was agreed that Highways improvements would likely be prioritised.



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8. TO REVIEW EARMARKED RESERVES AND GENERAL RESERVES

The Clerk advised that, in addition to £6,004.55 of CIL funds, the Parish Council holds £120,000 in earmarked reserves arising from the sale of the building. A portion of the capital receipt from the sale was spent on the previous playground projects, and this figure represents the remaining balance.

It was noted that the Parish Council should maintain a minimum of £45,000 in general reserves, and therefore steps will need to be taken to rebuild this level. An updated position on general reserves will be presented at the January meeting, when the precept will be finalised.

9. TO DISCUSS PRECEPT CALCULATION AND INITIAL RECOMMENDATION TO BE APPROVED AT THE JANUARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING.

Following some discussion, it was agreed that a precept of £145,000 was likely to be required. It was noted that the VAT position would be confirmed at the January meeting, after which the budget could be finalised.

ACTIONS:

Clerk to confirm the percentage increase with Dartford Borough Council and present the finalised budget at the January meeting for approval.

Clerk to draft a statement to accompany the budget, to be prepared for publication in March/April.

The meeting closed at 7pm.

Chair: _____

Date: _____