

Finance Update NDP

In the Autumn of 2018 our predecessors applied for a Localities Grant of £5,115.

That application was reduced to £3500.00 by Locality, (a Government funded department) to keep within the basic grant threshold of £9000 as £5,500 had already been spent getting the first version of the plan to readiness for section 14 consultation.

The £3,500 was paid in January 2019.

It is a condition of grant funding that any monies unspent at the end of a financial year must be repaid. Money cannot be 'carried forward'.

At the end of the financial year in March 2019, although Kirkwells had apparently quoted for £3,500 to take the revised draft NDP to consultation on regulation 14 draft plan only £1,788 of work had been carried out.

Therefore the balance of £1,712 should have been paid back. This did not happen. Neither was that requirement communicated to the new Parish Council by the Clerk or any continuity member of the Parish Council when the new Parish Council met for the first time at the end of May 2019.

Additionally, the Parish Council should have submitted an account of their spend at the end of the 2019 financial year. This was not done.

I should explain here that these aspects of underspend, and payback, did not form part of the finance discussion of the Parish Council meeting on 28th January as this information has only come to light since that meeting.

For clarity a new grant cannot be applied for until unspent sums of a previous grant have been paid back.

As an aside a new grant could also not have been applied for because, as many will be aware, work to take the NDP to the next stage was not completed due to the need to revise the NDP to better reflect parishioners' views. The AECOM report which the previous Parish Council commissioned following a new call for sites in Autumn 2018 was not received by councillors in its entirety until 16th October 2019 so the first opportunity for Councillors to discuss the document and responses to it was in November 2019.

I am advised that in July 2019 the new Parish Council received training on NDP matters from Kirkwells which included 'next steps'. Kirkwells and the Clerk to

the Council assured the Parish Council that all was in hand and the work to revise the NDP to reflect the views of the community could continue. No mention was made at this stage either of the need to pay back the underspend.

As it stands, I believe the Parish Council needs to repay £1712 of Locality Grant.

We will then be applying for a grant to complete the consultation and referendum process.

We are confident that in spite of these anomalies we can and will continue with the process of producing a draft NDP which reflects the views and needs of Parishioners according to our time line.

There will be no need to seek additional funding nor to revise the plan.

Kirkwells continue to support us and have been asked to re-quote for work required to bring the NDP to referendum stage. It is anticipated that approximately £2,500 will be required. I ask that Councillors approve the allocation of this money from the budget, though external funding in the form of grants to cover the costs will also be sought.

We take this matter extremely seriously. We will not have our competency or honesty called into question. We will therefore be referring the matter of the unspent Locality Grant to the appropriate authorities.