

## Financial Summary Report 2022-2023

### **Income:**

Sandymoor Parish Council have two main forms of income, the council tax precept, and the dividends from the investments.

The precept is an amount set by the parish council, paid per household through the council tax bill, to fund the parish council and the projects we are involved in for the betterment of the local area. The precept for the 2022-2023 financial year was unchanged from the previous year and set at £29.09, for a band D property, which works out at less than 60p per week per household. This precept also allows us to administrate the maintenance of the current, and any future, areas of public opens space that the parish council own as well as help fund any projects to improve the area of Sandymoor Parish.

The dividends are payments the council receives each quarter as a return on the investments of the money for the maintenance of the public open spaces the council own.

We also opened a second investment fund in which to place the rental received from Sandymoor Ormiston Academy for their use of the playing fields and the quarterly dividends from this fund. This fund is being built up to cover the costs of replacing all our on-site assets on the playing fields at the end of their life, including the 4G pitch and tennis courts.

The dividend income from the land maintenance fund for the 2022-2023 financial year was £30,084 and from the playing fields fund was £1,653.

### **Background on Investment Funds:**

The parish council made the decision a few years ago to offer to take ownership of the public open spaces within the parish from the developers within the parish. To enable the parish council to maintain these areas that were gifted to the council, the ownership of the land also came with a dowry from the developers at a value that should allow the parish council to be able to provide maintenance of those areas of public land in perpetuity, ideally without any extra costs to the residents. This agreement was made with the view that there would be less risk to the parish and it's residents if the parish council owned and maintained the land (and the monies set aside for this purpose) than if it went to a third party, who may not provide the same level or service or many even go out of business, leaving no funds to maintain the land the costs of which would then realistically fall on the residents. The dowry that came with the parcels of land have been invested in a fund and the dividends are paid to the council on a quarterly basis. These dividends are then used to pay for the maintenance of those public spaces. Any unspent funds left at the end of the fiscal year will be reinvested to help futureproof the investment in the long term.

This is an ongoing policy of the parish council, and we are in constant talks with developers to take ownership of any public open space within Sandymoor, however the valuation of the dowry payment must be correct to enable us to maintain the land without any further costs to the residents of the parish, as much as is possible. The dowry monies are currently invested with CCLA to give a modest return to allow the parish council to maintain the land to our specification without taking too large a

risk with the invested monies, however, this is under review with our finance working group to understand if this is the best long-term option or whether there are better ways.

## **Spending**

### **Administration and Staffing:**

The 2022-2023 financial year saw some big changes within the parish council and the parish itself. Early in 2022, when the previous clerk resigned, and the council made the decision to split the role of the clerk into two part-time roles: a clerk and a responsible financial officer/digital officer. This has given the parish council more flexibility on developing the parish council and improving the communication routes with the public. This restructuring also meant there was an underspend in budgeted salary costs due to lower number of hours required to do the split roles than previously, therefore giving better value for money for the parish as a whole.

Over the 2022-2023 financial year, the precept money covered the costs involved in running the parish council, including paying the salary of the clerk and the RFO/digital officer, various essential administration costs as well as the room hire to host the parish council meetings. It has also covered the costs of any training of employees and new councillors, to enable the parish council to work more effectively in improving the area on behalf of its residents.

Thanks to the work done in cultivating a positive relationship with the manager at Hazlehurst, from quarter 4 of the 2022/23 financial year, the parish council have been allowed to relocate their meetings to one of the rooms in their facility at no cost, which will reduce the councils outgoing for the coming year as well as Halton Housing Association making a donation to the council to put towards any of our improvement projects around the area.

The parish council also provided a grant to Sandymoor Community Association for marquee hire for the Jubilee Party on the village green and Sandymoor Hall in the summer as well as supporting the local litter picking group with the funding of some equipment, including a cart.

### **Public Open Spaces:**

These administration costs have allowed the council to manage the maintenance of the public open spaces the council own as well as instigate negotiations with new developers for other parcels of public open space and accompanying dowries. At the end of this financial year, there was still no agreement between the parties, but this negotiation will continue.

The ongoing costs of maintaining the parcels of land the council already own has been covered by the dividends received from the POS dowry investment, with no shortfall needing to be covered from the councils' other funds. In fact, there was some excess from those dividends which will be held by the council until the decision has been made on how best to invest those funds going forwards. The contract for the public open space maintenance expired at the end of the 22/23 financial year and was opened up for tender and a company was appointed to carry out this work for the next 3 years. Due to the competitive pricing of the quote, the council should continue to have an excess from the POS dividends which can be reinvested to grow the lump sum.

### Projects:

The council have liaised with Halton Borough Council on behalf of the residents over matters that have been raised by the public, including an increase in litter around the area and concerns over speeding on the roads in Sandymoor.

By the end of the year, the parish council had moved forwards on an increase in the number or frequency of litter bins and collections, but no concrete plans have been agreed as of yet.

The council have also been in talks with the local police over the concern about speeding which led to an increase in speed monitoring occurring on Pitts Heath Lane and there have been discussions about getting a Speed Indicator Device (SID) for use within the area. Again, there is no final agreement yet but the discussions over the options open to the council are ongoing.

At the request of local residents, the clerk applied to NWAS for a publicly available defibrillator to be installed within the area, but no decision was made by the end of the financial year. This will be followed up in the next financial year.

With 2022 being HM Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee year, the parish council wanted to have some legacy projects to commemorate the historic occasion.

A successful application was put in by the clerk for some lottery funding to allow the council to buy and maintain some flower planters to place around the area. Eight planters were installed and there is now a planters volunteers group comprising of some councillors and local volunteers from the residents to maintain the plants and keeping them looking beautiful. The cost of six of the planters was funded with the lottery grant, as well as funding the benches in the Jubilee Forest and some bird boxes that were given to members of the public. One of the planters was funded from the HHA donation and another is jointly funded from Sandymoor Ormiston Academy with the parish council.

The parish council also decided to plant a forest on part of their public open space, which would become part of the 'Queens Green Canopy' project as a lasting legacy of the platinum jubilee. This forest was not quite completed by the end of the 22/23 year but should be ready for an official opening in the summer of 2023.

With the creation of the 'digital officer role,' the opportunity was taken to design a new website and rebrand the council with a new, more modern looking logo. The new website was designed to look more up-to-date and user-friendly. It was designed to try to improve communication between the council and the public as well as including a community hub section for the public to be able to share information on locally run groups/classes as well as some useful contact numbers for issues that regularly arise.

As a council, we wanted to improve the youth engagement with local decisions and have been working hard cultivating a relationship with Sandymoor Ormiston Academy to try to create those links to get older children and young adults more involved with the decisions that are made around the area.

## Conclusion

Over the 2022-2023 financial year, the council have been busy with many things in the background as well as some more visible long-term projects within the area. The planters and the Jubilee Forest projects are mostly complete and hopefully will be a lasting improvement to the area. A new contractor is in place to maintain our open spaces and negotiations are continuing with the current developers about the council taking ownership of their open spaces once the developments are complete. We are continuing to work hard, cultivating our relationship with other agencies to move some of the area improvement projects forwards, including HBC, our local borough councillors, Sandymoor Ormiston Academy and Cheshire police. Other projects are still ongoing and will continue but there has been a lot of groundwork done to get some projects started ready for the next financial year.

## Financial Overview

<b>Money In</b>		
Precept	£	41,220.00
POS Dividend (any unspent excess ringfenced to reinvest)	£	30,084.14
Playing Fields Rent & Dividend (ringfenced to reinvest)	£	13,653.06
VAT Rebate	£	7,283.08
HHA Donation	£	5,000.00
Lottery Grant	£	9,520.00
<b>Total In</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>106,760.28</b>
<b>Money Out</b>		
<b>Council Running Costs</b>		
Staffing Costs (Inc Training and IT hardware)	£	23,820.60
Admin (Room hire, insurance, IT, audit, legal & membership fees)	£	19,262.51
Grants (SCA for jubilee marquee hire)	£	1,250.00
<b>Running Costs Total</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>44,333.11</b>
<b>Projects</b>		
POS Maintenance (SLA1, Swans Reach pond & surroundings)	£	20,352.00
Planters	£	9,455.19
Jubilee Forest	£	8,587.20
<b>Total Spent on Projects</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>38,394.39</b>
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>82,727.50</b>
<b>Funds left at end of year (inc POS &amp; sink fund excess)</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>24,032.78</b>
<b>POS &amp; Sink Fund Excess to Reinvest</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>23,385.20</b>
<b>Final Excess Figure</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>647.58</b>