

**Minster Parish Council**  
**Annual Finance Report**  
**2019/2020**

I will first apologise if you have already read our Chairman's report, for any repetitions, but some points do have financial implications.

Last year you may remember, I mentioned the difficulty in fixing a budget due to the indecisions of Brexit and the forthcoming elections. Although Brexit is settled, the financial ramifications may not become apparent until well into 2021. As to local government, Thanet (which in my 40 years of residence) has not changed and remains in turmoil. Central government however, would seem after 2 general elections, to now have a mandate and a clear way forward whether or not you personally agree with it. Again, as I have said in the past, my job is to oversee the financial operation at Minster Parish Council. Our clerk has made that job a great deal easier by doing an excellent job in preparing a draft budget for 2020/2021 and I thank her for that. Getting to the point, and with all that said, a budget was set and then along came Covid 19 and threw the whole country into chaos. However, Minster Parish Council is still in a good financial position. Now let me mention some of the things on which we have spent your money.

As I mentioned last year, this year we have had to update our computer software to deal with tax and vat accounting in the sum of £2,500. Insurance costs came in at road risk £1,293 and general insurance at £3,519. Our Clerk managed to fix the premium for 3 years. This was particularly favourable as we have had 2 substantial thefts from the Cemetery. These break ins have resulted in numerous repairs and eventually the purchase of 2 containers at a cost of £3,580 to house our equipment.

We have totally refurbished the Sports Pavilion and bought it up to 2020 standards which also brings it into line with new regulations which will allow us to continue holding league football matches. It has also made it a much more desirable venue for hire. We have also increased the floor area, which will help to retain the pre-school group which operates in term time. The cost of all this came in at £12,300.

The asset transfer of the 2 car parks and toilet block is still not completed but it is agreed with TDC at a net cost of £100 per site but with Minster Parish Council picking up the cost of all legal fees for both sides at an estimate of £10,000. This does allow us to keep both sites free of charge to the public. While on the subject of TDC, the Clerk has managed to negotiate agency payments to us for a period of 2 years at £20,000 per annum. This helps to pay for the services provided by us on their behalf. I have been looking back at figures from the past over the last few weeks whilst completing this report and I was amazed that we were receiving £72,000 a decade ago to do less work.

We will continue to support the annual firework display, Twinning association and carnival court. The total cost of this is £3,000. Other expenditures include:- the Chairman's new chain of office est. £5,000; all weather pitch repairs due to subsidence £850; the refurbish of the sheep wash in Bedlam Court Lane £1,800; new Council notice board in the Monkton Road Car Park £1,200; a contribution to the Church notice board £250; speed watch £360. We did set aside £2,000 for VE day

celebrations which of course have been cancelled due to Covid 19. There will be some costs incurred however for non-refundable deposits.

After long negotiations with KCC, the rent on the Parish office has been fixed at £1,696 per annum plus £1,100 contribution to the running costs. This is 50% less than was asked for and will take us up to November 2020 at which time the lease on the building expires. The rent arrears have also been paid. There is no guarantee that this lease will be renewed so with that in mind we have been looking into the feasibility of a conversion or extension of the Pavilion to house a new parish office. Plans are now being drawn up for costing and approval. The cost so far is £1,600.

We have had various staffing issues which I cannot go into here for reasons of confidentiality but it has resulted in the short term hiring of another member of staff. I think you would agree that the standards set by our staff are high. We received praise from the chief executive of TDC on her visit when she said that there was no way they could achieve our level of service at the costs incurred. "Praise indeed."

We have set wage rises at 2% and the relevant scale increases for the clerk and her assistant. As I am sure you are aware all this has to be paid for. Parishes are still not capped as district and county councils are at 2% + 2%. This is why their subsidies to us have been cut as they are aware we can still raise money by precept. The precept rise this year will be 10.5% which equates to an income total of £82,748 to MPC. In turn this will increase the payment for a band D property by £1.25 a month. This may seem high but in comparison to some, not so bad. For instance Acols rise is 82.5%. This increase was set before the Covid 19 pandemic and lockdown. I fear that in 12 months time we may be reporting from an entirely different position. Since lockdown the income of the council has been substantially cut with no fees for council services. However, we have still been able to add £12,500 to the reserve for the all weather pitch mat replacement which now stands at £96,990.

Can I mention again, the work to try and improve the highway issues in Minster. These are paid for with 106 fund monies and whilst on the subject there is still some £80,000 left from the Herensbrook development. I personally, would like to spend this money on a new car park in St Marys Road, but at present this is not possible. I would like to ask Cllr Crow-Brown, our Planning committee chairman, to keep an eye on the position at that site. We have made some small increases in charges in line with TDC cemeteries and inflation. This report only covers a very small part of the day to day processes of the council and its economic management carried out by the clerk and her assistant. Again, my gratitude goes to them both.

With regards to the finances of Minster Parish Council, if you have any concerns you should contact the clerk or myself through the parish office. Our Annual Returns are published on our website.

**Councillor John Quittenden**  
**Chair of Finance and Policy**