**2020 Clerk’s Report**

**5 b) Parish Precept 2020/21:**

The precept for this year has been set at £54,400 and the band D rate has increased by 2% from £54.58 to £55.68 p.a.

**c) Draft Accounts for 2019/2020:**

In 2019/20 income amounted to £136,424.64 and expenditure to £146,762.29. Income increased by approximately £54,581 largely because Bedford BC paid double the amount of precept in error. Community Infrastructure Levy receipts reduced by £4,589 and Neighbourhood Plan grants reduced from £3,250 in 2018/19 to nothing in 2019/20. This was offset by an increase of £9,263 in the VAT refund on expenditure on play equipment in 2018/19. Expenditure increased by approximately £19,129 mostly due to the repayment of £52,800 of precept to Bedford Borough Council, plus an increase of £7,362 in capital expenditure to cover the cost of new bollards on Grange Green and the Green, an additional £2,157 on the play area to repair the surfacing and £820 to remove and clear up after the travellers. This was offset by a reduction of £36,166 in the cost of new play equipment, £5,943 less due in VAT repayments and £4,235 less spent on the Neighbourhood Plan. Donations totalling £6,518 were made to the Pre-School, the Day Centre, the Youth Club, Bedfordshire Scouts and the RBL for a poppy wreath.

**d) Planning**

During 2019/20 the Parish Council was consulted on and commented on a total of 49 planning and related applications, compared to 47 in 2018/19. Most were for relatively minor works but Council objected to 6 applications on the grounds of impact on neighbours, overdevelopment, development outside the Settlement Policy Area and conversion of bungalows to houses. As a general policy Council also objected to 6 applications for the removal of trees unless they could not be saved and asked for replacements to be planted in their place.

Council also objected to the proposals for development on land off Lovell Road and behind the High Street on the grounds that the development would be outside the Settlement Policy Area and the sites were not included for development in our Neighbourhood Plan. The High Street application was refused by the Borough and the Lovell Road applications withdrawn. Council also strongly objected to the unsightly parapets on the Highfield Road rail bridge. These have been given temporary permission for a year to enable electrification to progress but we are hoping that something more in keeping with the area will be put forward for the permanent barriers.