



## GRENDON UNDERWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

All correspondence to the Parish Clerk on [clerk.gupc@outlook.com](mailto:clerk.gupc@outlook.com)  
Tel: 0787 368 3043 Web Site: <https://www.gupc.org.uk/>

### Annual Report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) 2024/25 Dated: May25

#### INTRODUCTION

The Council practices due diligence in its fiscal management of public funds according to its mandated powers under the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and other legislation regarding Accountability & Transparency, Fraud, Risk Management and Reserves Management.

The Council can demonstrate adequate financial governance as defined by the guidance of the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioner's Guide – revised March 2025, Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) Practitioners' Guide 2025 as well as its own Financial Regulations, all available on the web site.

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2024 - 25

The financial year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March.

**The Council continues to maintain its two main strategic goals from previous years to;**

1. maintain reserves in excess of 50% of its statutory spend (currently around £17000 over a typical year), in line with industry standard accountancy practice, thereby mitigating any risk to carrying out its statutory duties whilst ensuring a prudent discretionary spend, supported by third party grants, to the benefit of the community and
2. maintain the same precept request as the previous 10 years, thereby ensuring yet another year the council tax of residents of the parish is not adversely affected - the only local authority in Buckinghamshire to do so.

**At start of year, council reserves stood at £13272 reducing to £10916 by year end.**

The interim budget meeting was held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024 when the precept request was authorised for submission in line with the County deadline in January 2025. **For the 10<sup>th</sup> year in a row, the precept was retained at £20851 such as to have no effect on residents' council tax.**

**Council accounts for 2023-24 successfully withstood an Annual Internal Audit on 30/05/2024 and an External Audit on 27/09/2024.**

Council accounts for 2024-25 are scheduled for an Annual Internal Audit in June 2025 and the unaudited accounts can be inspected between 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025 and 14<sup>th</sup> July 2025. Council will ratify the External Audit submission at its meeting in June 2025, subject to successful withstanding of the Internal Audit.

The External Auditor has until September 2025 to finalise its report to sign off on the 2024-25 accounts.

**Council overall annual spend, statutory (£17000) and discretionary (32956), was some £49956 (£31681 previous year).** Main expenditures items included £4539 environment, £2474 insurance, £1385 lighting, £5966 personnel, £1179 waste management, £1021 final loan repayment, £30000 into an earmarked reserve fund for new playground equipment, comprising £20000 National Lottery Grant & £10000 from Parish Council reserves.

**Council receipts were £47600**, comprising the £20851 precept, a successful application to the National Lottery for a grant of £20000, some very generous donations arising from the Grendon 800 festival and others of £1600 & a VAT reclaim of £5200 (Grendon Underwood Parish Council is a 'Section 33 Body' under the VAT Act 1994 and is therefore able to reclaim VAT even though it is not VAT registered. VAT is calculated for each financial year as it relates to suppliers invoicing directly on the council **and** which are VAT registered).

National Lottery Grant – council would like to gratefully acknowledge a grant of £20000 from the Lottery. It went into the current account on 1st November 25 and was transferred to a high interest account plus £10000 from reserves on 15th November 25.

Amongst several new initiatives, Council wishes to continue renewing playground equipment, thanks to a generous grant from the Saye & Sele Foundation and further collaborations with EKFB (HS2) for further improvements in community facilities.

**Total Fixed Assets** have increased from £233773 to £251677 to reflect commissioning of new playground equipment and 3 MVAS units and two VAS units.

**Reserves Management**

The Council has taken due regard of the need to put in place a General Reserve Policy and has reviewed the level and purpose of all Earmarked Reserves.

**This year, Council allocated 30000 into an earmarked reserve fund derived from a National Lottery grant of £20000 and £10000 out of general reserve. This has been earmarked for playground equipment upgrades and other improvements.**

Council remains committed to its multi-year strategy of steadily leveraging funds into the community.

Note: Excess reserves may trigger an external audit to explanation such excess and reduce the chances of success when applying for grants from third parties.

**Due Diligence & Risk Analysis**

To reflect risk identified in the Risk Analysis and to maximise transparency & accountability, all Council expenditure is carried out electronically which must be authorised by at least two Councillors & executed by Direct Debit, Standing Order or by BACS. A formal Procurement Policy is in force to mitigate risks associated with unauthorised council commitment and liability.

Except by rare, unavoidable exception, there are no petty cash, no paper cheques and no credit or debit cards in the system.

**Section 106 Accounting.** - Section 106 money is generated from a levy on developers wishing to build non-affordable housing in parishes. This is held by County and released to local authorities subject to prior approval of eligible local proposals and strict planning & project management criteria being in place. All S106 reserves have been deployed into the community and now stand at £0.

**Section 137 Accounting** – Section 137 empowers councils to spend public money from their precept for contingency items not covered by spend empowered under any other legislation. This is set at a maximum defined by the number of residents in the parish. The council has not used any S137 money.

**Loans, Contracts & Agreements**

A 5-year Liability & Asset Insurance agreement remains in force until May 2028.

Agreed subscriptions consist of: ICO, B&MKALC [NALC], NBPPC, BPFA about £235 per annum.

Footpath lighting energy is subject to a fixed term contract

Footpath lighting maintenance is subject to a standard contract

One Standing Order as well as several Direct Debits remain active this year.

The last payment of a 5 year zero % interest loan was made in February 2025.

----- Report Ends -----

Acting Responsible Finance Officer, Grendon Underwood Parish Council

May 2025