

Background

The Council sets a Civic Budget every year. It has always been implied that this was the Mayor's budget but unfortunately, there is no policy or note to cover the types of expenditure that are expected to be covered under this budget.

In theory, the use of the budget would fall under the S137 powers which allows the Council to spend on items that are not covered by another power. I am currently confirming my opinion regarding this budget and S137 with OALC and hope to have a response to share at the meeting.

The Civic Budget in 2022/23 was £1,000 and the expenditure was only £160 which left an underspend of £840.

When the previous Mayor Cllr Poskitt was still in office in April 2023 she asked the RFO to use £500, which includes VAT, of the underspend from her 2022/23 Civic Budget to pay towards works on a tree in St Mary's Magdalen's Churchyard.

Unfortunately, this request to use underspends from the previous year is a breach of the financial standards as the request should have been taken to full council for agreement. Although it was believed at the time of the request that it had been discussed at previous meetings these discussions do not appear to have been minuted.

It should also be noted that at the time Cllr Poskitt offered to contribute from the Civic Budget towards the tree works there was legislation in place that did not allow expenditure to churches but since the end of December this legislation has changed and councils can now support local churches.

As the payment has already been made to Boward Trees the situation needs to be rectified as best as possible.

Rather than requesting that the Council to retrospectively agree the £500 carry forward into the Civic Budget the £500 increase in the Civic Budget will be reversed, and this report will be requesting approval to move the expenditure to another code.

Budget Positions

As the carry forward should not be included in the budget the current budget and expenditure position, which includes the £416.67 expenditure on the tree, is: -

2023/23

Budget £1,000.00

Expenditure £1,087.62

Overspend £ 87.62

Should the request be approved to move the £416.67 of expenditure to the grass-cutting budget then the budget position would be: -

Budget £1,000.00

Expenditure £ 670.95

Underspend £ 329.05

Recommendation for Approval

As the legislation regarding Parish Council's allocation of funds to the Church has changed the Council is being asked to retrospectively agree to the expenditure for the tree works carried out in St Mary Magdalen Churchyard which cost £500 including VAT of £83.33 to be moved code 4402 Churchyard which currently has a budget of £1,500, expenditure of £875.17 and an underspend of £624.83.