

Clerk's Report February 2025

RFO activities

On top of the normal financial management activities this month, I have also done a VAT reclaim for Q2 and Q3 and reclaimed S106 money for the village pond and playground repairs. I am starting to focus on year end, making sure every thing that needs to be done is done and all monies that need to be reclaimed are in motion. I have also spent time checking through the Turnquay finance numbers, but have had no response since pointing out the errors in their version. I have checked through the finances for the S106 projects that are still open and there is £93.33 left on the pond, and £1,351.34 for the playground (before paying for the installation of the picnic benches).

Maintenance

Five Ash Pond

I have spent time this month on Five Ash Pond, trying to work out what could be done about it together with Graham. I arranged for the Lengthsman to help dig the grips at the road edge, but it was not feasible and there is more detail on this in the Maintenance Committee minutes. I have spoken to the CIL team at EHDC about possible funding and have been advised that there could be S106 money to help with the pond, but am still trying to finalize numbers as the figure they have given me seems to include spend already allocated elsewhere.

Village Green

We are currently dealing with an outbreak of moles on the village green. Our regulator contractor attended promptly and has also made a second return visit so it should soon be under control.

A large branch fell from the village green into the school grounds but has now been removed by the Lengthsman. The two picnic benches are going to be installed on 17th February.

The quote for further roundabout repairs is £4,398.13 (ex VAT). This includes replacing one of the segments of the roundabout platform with a new segment with a bolted trap door to allow easier greasing. The problem is that the installation instructions 10 years ago said the bearings should be greased regularly but this has not been done. Going forward we will add it on an annual basis into one of the quarterly Sawscapes inspections, starting a year after the bearings are replaced. There will be around £1k left on S106 Project 700 for the playground after the picnic bench installation cost, and I proposed to the maintenance committee that the rest is funded from Neighbourhood CIL, using a large part of the portion to be spent by April 2026. The Maintenance Committee has proposed getting on with this as soon as finances allow. The structural engineer has advised that it will increasingly impact on performance of the roundabout, but will not become dangerous so it can be delayed but definitely should happen next year to use the CIL.

Mowing contracts

Three responses were received to the request for quotations for the mowing contracts (out of six companies contacted) and these were collated for the maintenance committee. Once full council has ratified their decision, I will get the contracts drawn up and signed.

Cemetery

There are no issues in the cemetery other than tracking down who has been regularly putting the bins out. There has been a recent issue with the bins getting over-full, and we realize we have been dependent on someone's kindness for a long time without knowing who they are.

The issue with possible ash die-back in the corner tree is on hold for now as experts have advised that we need to wait for the summer to do an inspection as it is hard to diagnose in autumn / winter. It was not picked up on the last tree survey, which suggests that it is not far advanced, and Cllr Bennell cut back the ivy around the base on the tree before Christmas to improve its health.

There have been three requests this month: for a memorial permit, an ashes burial request and a burial rights purchase, but none have yet progressed to returning forms or payment.

Pavilion

There has been a fair bit of chasing and admin this month to get it across the final hurdle. The bad news is that I have now had to inform the council tax office that we have handover so will have a business rates bill soon. I am keen to get it furnished and operational now and looking forward to it no longer being an agenda item.