**Berkswich Parish**

**Annual Financial Statement – 7 May 2024**

The Parish Council finances are sound. The total earmarked reserves had decreased due to spending in recent years. The Council agreed to increase the Precept by 50% for financial year 2024-25 to allow the Council to recoup some of the money spent and ensure future financial viability. During 2023-24 a number of larger authorities had issued Section 114 notices, effectively declaring themselves bankrupt and it was felt that it was important for Berkswich Parish Council to have a financial buffer.

With regards to other income, spending on large projects in 2022-23 meant that over £9,000 of VAT was reclaimed from HMRC in April 2023. The Parish Council applied for and have now received a DEFRA Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) grant through Staffordshire County Council of over £9,000 for a project at Walton Coppice.

Interest on the Council’s short-term investments had increased exponentially and two accounts had generated over £2,500 over the year.

Regular grounds maintenance costs continue to be one of the highest expenses at almost £10,000 for 2023-24 around a quarter of which were contributed through Staffordshire County Council’s Minor Highways Agreement. Maintenance of trees on School Lane was not budgeted for, but a tree survey showed that some urgent work was necessary which cost just over £9,000.

The Parish Council are applying for another FiPL grant shortly for a project at Hollybush Coppice to improve biodiversity and provide more educational opportunities for Berkswich Primary School pupils.

Sue Fullwood

Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer

30 April 2024