

- b) The Clerk reported the unreconciled bank balance and explained that it was unreconciled because Lloyds bank had barred access as it still hadn't made the necessary changes in the mandate pending from 2017. Another mandate change proforma has been sent to the bank to correct this situation.
- c) **Draft budget for 2018/19.** The discussion continued from the 11th December meeting with suggestions made by Councillors integrated and a new draft produced. Decisions were taken on the following line items:
1. Administration including the Clerk's hours: Following on the discussion in December, the cost of the Clerk's salary under different scenarios of weekly hours was presented. Currently, the Clerk's contract consists of 5 hours weekly with extra hours approved by the Chairman as overtime. The Clerk confirmed that she currently required at least 5 hours of overtime each week. It was also pointed out that in 2006, the former Clerk had 10 hours per week under a less onerous regulatory regime. It was **resolved to increase the budget to include 10 hours per week for the Clerk. This change would subsequently be reflected in an amendment to the Clerk's contract, substituting 10 hours weekly for 5 hours plus overtime. The Clerk was requested to keep a record of hours worked so that if there was a reduction in the amount of work, fewer hours could be claimed. This would also help in future budget planning.** The Chairman asked that her objection to the increase in the Clerk's hours be recorded.
 2. Village Maintenance: It was noted that this was an estimate based on current rates and was retained for next year.
 3. External Audit: It was noted that the base cost of the External Audit was £100 and that the extra costs were all incurred because the Auditor had to deal with questions raised by electors. This year, the Council had been successful in working closely with BDO throughout the process in order to keep the cost to £822, down from £1500 in the previous year, despite the large volume of questions from some electors. It was therefore agreed to reduce the budgeted amount to £800 for 2018/19 with a goal for the Council to eventually reduce the amount to the base rate.
 4. Payroll Admin: Should be increased to £54 from £40 in line with actual costs in 2016/17.
 5. Legal Fees: Further investigation of costs was carried out. Costs would be incurred for a new license for the playing fields and for the Heritage Hut. Additional legal advice would be sought for a number of other issues including managing FOI requests and hostile correspondence. If the Council managed these costs carefully, including having a councillor writing up legal advice sought, the initial indication of £5000 could be reduced to £2500. This lower amount was reflected in the draft budget.
 6. The items related to Finance admin, Stationery and Postage, Hiring of Hall, Training, Insurance, Heritage hut rates, Playground, Playing fields, Allotments, Subscriptions, Internal Audit, Website, and Rent to WCLC were all agreed as shown in the draft budget.

In total, the draft budget as discussed came to a total of £19,672.84. This compares with spending in 2017/18 of approximately £19,274.00. The Council acknowledged that the precept would have to be increased to either £20,000 or £24,000 to cover the budget and to start rebuilding the depleted reserves. **It was resolved that the Clerk would inform Simon Taylor from SCDC, who administers precepts, that the final precept request will be issued to him directly after the meeting of 12th February when the final figure would be agreed.**