

# Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Full Council 10/11/2022

## Library Contribution

**Agenda item 22/081 7: To resolve the payment of £3731.00 as SMPC's Library contribution for 2022/2023**

### BACKGROUND

An email has been received from West Berkshire Council's (WBC) Acting Culture & Libraries Manager requesting a voluntary financial contribution to the library service for the financial year 2022/2023

They confirms:

*The library service has an annual budget shortfall of £150k to deliver the service – 8 libraries, Mobile and At Home service, e-library. In 2017 we proposed a contribution based on £1 per parish resident - or whatever contribution parishes wished to make. It is a voluntary donation/contribution, not a grant and is compliant with Section 137 of the Local Government Act. We have previously provided legal advice to clarify that. The council is not delegating any part of its statutory duty to provide library services or levying a charge on parishes. Contributions are ring-fenced for the aspects of the service that the data shows are most used by your residents – for example, a particular branch library.*

In addition, WBC Have undertaken a Review of Library Services:

*In 2017 we said that we would conduct a further review after 3 years. The Review was delayed due to the pandemic, but has now taken place. It included a new community needs assessment (including the needs that have emerged during the pandemic), a Peer Review commissioned through the Local Government Association (LGA), engagement with parish and town councils, staff and volunteers, other public services, community groups and a cross-section of library members. The purpose was to hear your views on what the Libraries Service does well and what it could do differently or better. The outcome of the Review sets out options for the service so that it can continue to improve and meet community needs. It is currently going through the Council's executive cycle and will be considered by elected members in December 2022 when it will become public.*

Other information supplied:

- 22-081 7.1 West Berkshire Libraries Annual Report 2021-22

- 22-081 7.2 Library Usage Data Per Parish for the past 3 years. (This this data only relates to the borrowing of physical books and does not include e-library loans or other library services.)

## **Cost**

Previously, the Council contributed to the library service under s137 (£3,797 in 2020/2021 & £3,792 in 2021/2022). This grant, however, may now be made under the Council's General Power of Competence. The SMPC 2022/2023 budget for grants is £7,500 of which £13.00 has been spent to date. The £7,500 is in addition to the Community Grant Fund of £10,000

The most recent parish population data held by West Berkshire Council as published by the Office of National Statistics, September 2021, gives the mid-year population estimates for Stratfield Mortimer for 2020 at 3,731. This gives a proposed voluntary contribution by SMPC of £3,731.

## **Recommendation**

To approve the payment of £3731.00 as SMPC's Library contribution for 2022/2023.

*Clerk 31/10/2022*