

Smeeton Westerby Parish Council

2017-18 Budget and Precept

Summary

The onset of the Localism Act and the impact of austerity measures on both the County and District Councils are already resulting in changes to our community including a reduction in local waste disposal site opening times and a reduction in street lighting.

The amount that the Parish Council has requested on an annual basis from the District Council (the parish precept) has, in recent years, been maintained at a very low level. In the interests of financial responsibility and to avoid depleting the council's low level of reserves the council has considered carefully the budget requirements for the coming financial year and resolved to increase the parish precept as detailed below. The increases will ensure the council is able to plan for the future and continue to function in the best interests of the parishioners. The budget set for 2017-18 is designed to be prudent while acknowledging the need to maintain a recommended level of reserves and continue to improve the quality of service delivery and communications.

Where possible, the council will seek grants to subsidise improvement projects and to reduce the impact on the precept. We will also maintain our focus on managing our base costs and ensuring best value for money.

Specific Proposals

1. We have recently employed a fully salaried Clerk (due to be CiLCA qualified in 2017) which will assist the Parish Council in meeting its future legal and financial responsibilities.
2. The Council has not previously budgeted amounts for election expenses, tree surveys and tree works or any councillor training and general expenses. These are necessary items of expenditure and need to be budgeted for.
3. The Council has identified that remedial works need to be undertaken to the boundary hedge and footpath through the allotments. These works are not funded by allotment income.
4. The Council needs to budget for maintenance and upkeep costs for the Vehicle Activated Sign.
5. The legal requirement to undertake a professional internal audit on an annual basis requires a substantial increase in this budget heading.
6. We will continue to improve communications across the parish through the use of public notice boards, the website and other means open to us.
7. As part of continued road safety improvements in our area, we will continue to investigate 'speed reduction' initiatives in coordination with the County Highways department.

Questions that you may have...

1. How has this year's precept been calculated?

The steps that we have followed are:

- Review the current year income and expenditure for our base running costs;

- Reduce costs where possible and address any shortcomings found during the current year;
- Identify the projects that are continuing through from the current year or planned for the coming year;

2. Which items are critical 'day-to-day' expenditure?

The key items at this time making up our base running costs are staff costs, mowing costs, insurance premium and audit fees.

3. What are projects?

Projects are a means of providing improved services or maintaining existing assets. Some typical projects that have recently been launched or are planned for the coming year include:

- Traffic safety and speed reduction techniques and facilities based on the speed watch initiative.
- Training for staff and councillors to improve the level of service provided to the community.

4. Why does there need to be an increase to the precept for next year?

We are increasing the base budget to make allowance for:

Allotment works (including anticipated expenditure on footpath and handrail replacement works;

An LRALC subscription;

A fully salaried Clerk;

Insurance;

Internal audit (a change of supplier is required for internal audit and £300 is indicative of current market costs);

External Audit;

Village Green mowing;

Footpaths maintenance;

£137 donations;

Website maintenance and fees;

Maintenance and upkeep costs of our new Vehicle Activated Sign;

Parish owned trees including safety surveys and remedial works as necessary;

Election expenses;

General Expenses (including Councillor training);

Stationary/postage and administration.

Proposals for Increase

The precept received for 2016-2017 was set at **£3250.00** and had not been increased for several years. The precept for 2017-2018 has been increased to **£8170** which is an increase of **£4920.00**.

In terms of your council tax bill this change will have the net effect of increasing a typical Band D council tax bill for a single household by approximately £30.60 per year (which equates to an increase in the household parish council contribution from £20.17 in 2016/17 to £50.78 in 2017/18). Residents should note that even after this increase, the household parish council contribution for Smeeton Westerby is still below national average of £57.00 per year at band D.

This increase will enable the Parish Council to budget effectively for the coming year, begin to replenish its reserves and budget for future anticipated expenditure. This in turn will enable the Parish Council to plan for the future and look towards further means by which the Parish Council can use its influence and role to improve facilities in the local community and enhance the lives of parishioners in the years to come.

For any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the Clerk, Frances Webster, on 07527189669 or contact@smeetonwesterbypc.org.uk.

Signed by the Chairman:

Dated: