

Bradpole Parish Council

Report from the 2023~24 Budget Working Group meeting held 22nd November 2022.

Present: Cllrs Baker, Overall, Mather, Smart W., Veglio, RFO & Deputy Clerk.

The Parish Clerk (Responsible Finance Officer) presented draft 2023~24 budget and precept figures to the group for consideration.

Members discussed the reports noting:

- The recently agreed Clerks' 2022 National Salary Pay Award is provided for together with salary scale increments and an allowance for a possible 2023 Pay Award of + c.2%.
- Website budget at £1000 compared to Hosting costs of c.£200 p.a. The budget includes a provision for consultancy advice relating to [WCAG 2.1](#) and shortly to be published [WCAG 2.2](#). It was suggested that in future years this provision could be transferred to "earmarked" Reserves if it remains unspent in 2023~24.
- Other points were clarified and an additional £500, was proposed for the Community Events budget, taking it to £2500, which, in the precept year, will include the King's Coronation.

The following figures were agreed by the working group for presentation to full Council:

2023~24 Budget £57,860

2023~24 Precept £44,095

taking account of:

- a) the projected budget items underspend in the current year (£8515) being carried forward, under those budget categories, for expenditure in 2023~24 and;
 - b) funds amounting to £5250 having already been "earmarked" in Reserves for certain budget items.
- The proposed precept of £44,095 represents a 6.8% increase on the current year's precept of £41278.

The Parish Precept has been largely unchanged during the past two precept years. It was considered that an increase of 6.8% in 2023~24, taking into account inflation currently in the region of 11% p.a. (CPI), represented a pragmatic approach and a fair and balanced outcome for our residents.

The average BAND D parish precept rate will be based on the Council Tax Base for 2023~24 which Dorset Council expect to publish in mid-December. This figure, based on Dorset Councils' expected Council Tax receipts, may fall marginally from the current year's figure of 959.2 as the country enters a recession. It is proposed that once the BAND D figure is calculated the Parish Clerk will consider the effect on the 2023~24 BAND D level for the Parish and advise Councillors accordingly

COUNCIL TAX NOTES:

The final calculation of residents' full Council Tax for 2023~24 will include those charges applied by: Dorset Council, Police, Fire & Rescue, & Adult Social Care. This is on an equivalent basis across the Dorset Council Area and represents the great bulk of the full Council Tax payable.

The local Parish element is a minor amount, variable between parishes, which nevertheless has an effect on the full amount residents pay depending on where they live.

At the current Council Tax Base of 959.2, set by Dorset Council, the average BAND D level for Bradpole parish in 2023~24 will amount to £45.97 p.a. (2022~23 = £43.03)

For indicative purposes a reduction in the Council Tax Base to, say, 930 will result in a BAND D level of £47.41.

The national average BAND D Council Tax for all precepting local councils is currently £77.21. Source: NALC Aug 2022.

RESERVES

Part of the annual financial review is to ensure that the Parish Council reserves are sufficient to meet requirements for 2023~24. This would include “earmarked” funds together with a minimum requirement for general reserves to meet legal obligations. Any remaining “free” reserves will be available to be spent within the Civil Parish for the benefit of its Council tax payers.

An updated Reserves report is to be prepared by the RFO for Councillors’ consideration.

The budget working group may wish to meet again at the current financial year end to consider the position at that time.

SPECIFIC ITEM:

EASE OF ACCESS TO PARISH RECREATION AREAS:

The November 2022 Inspection Report at Pageants Play Area, following the installation of replacement swings etc., highlighted the lack of adequate access for disabled persons.

This position has persisted for many years but the Parish Council has received no representations from residents in this matter.

Access to Gore Cross Recreation Area differs. Improvements had been considered some time ago but not progressed as access was thought to be adequate particularly in summer when the area is most used.

For future purposes the Council should set up a review on the cost and practicability of installing disabled access, primarily at Pageants Field/Play Area, and also revisit arrangements at Gore Cross Rec.

A report to Council should be produced over the next 6/12 months to:

- a) consider the practicality, requirement, and cost of such improvements and,
- b) report on funding/grant facilities that may be available for those improvements.

This could then be considered at the 2024~25 Budget Review meeting in Autumn 2023.

MOTIONS

- **To accept the budget and precept figures for 2023~24 as proposed.**
- **To agree the new Reserves figure for 2023~24.**
- **To produce a report for BPC on Ease of Access issues at the Parish Owned Recreation Areas for consideration in setting the 2024~25 budget.**

CB/BPC/Dec 2022