



Cradley and Storrige Parish Council

Proposed Budget 2023/24 Consultation

The darkest days of the Coronavirus Pandemic are behind us and thankfully we can start to look forward with more certainty. The last couple of years have affected everybody and the services provided by the Parish Council have been severely restricted. On the plus side the precept has been maintained at pre-covid levels of £45,000 for the last four years. In addition, the increase in numbers of new households has seen a fall in real terms of the actual precept charge per household. In the current year for the average Band D property the precept was £54 out of a total a Council Tax charge of £2,052. A proposed new precept of £60,000 for 2023 /2024 would be an increase of £18 per year, to £73, or less than 1% of the current total Council Tax charge which itself may well increase by at least 5%.

Because we have not been able to provide a full service, the reserves of the Parish Council have increased. So, as we move forward, we plan to utilise almost £30,000 of those reserves to implement improvements across the Parish, as included in our draft budget.

The proposed level of expenditure is set out in the table below. The full detailed breakdown can be found on the website.

Draft Budget 2023/24	£000'
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Expenditure: -	
Employment	18.2
Communications	2.5
Finance and Administration	15.8
Recreation and Environment	7.2
Lengthsman / Handyman	10.9
Highways	12.0
Total Allocated Expenditure	66.6
Contingency	6.6
Total Revenue Expenditure	73.2
Capital	14.9
VAT Recoverable	7.5
Total Budgeted Expenditure	95.6

Employment

This heading covers our new clerk's salary, expenses, and training. Richard is currently working towards a Certificate of Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualification and hopes to gain his qualification prior to the May elections, and we wish him every success.

Communications

After a three-year pause, we will once again distribute two copies of our Parish Newsletter (Summer and Winter) to every household.

Finance and Administration

As an established Parish Council with several Community Assets to maintain we incur a range of unavoidable expenses – Audit, Insurance, Subscriptions, and Elections, to name but a few. In addition, we provide Grants and Donations to help organisations providing community benefits with some of their costs, such as our Village Halls. We also help with maintenance of community assets such as defibrillators, the equipment of The Community First Responder and the maintenance of memorial clock in the church.

Recreation and Environment

Probably self-explanatory but covers the maintenance and improvements to our two recreation grounds and Crumpton Hill Village Green, including grass cutting, maintaining the play equipment, and other associated costs.

Lengthsman/Handyman

After two lengthy spells without a lengthsman we have now broadened the role to include maintenance jobs that may have been previously put out to contractors. It is hoped that all users of these areas will notice and appreciate the improvements in the coming year.

Highways

In the light of the problems experienced on our roads throughout the parish we have set up a separate Working Group to deal with these issues. The budget provides for initial works on traffic management and highway improvements particularly Cowleigh Road and Bosbury Road.

Contingency

We have provided 10% as in previous years as there is always uncertainty. This year in particular we still have high inflation which could well affect the materials and services we buy in.

Capital

Other than for a new notice board and provision of Speed indicator Devices (SIDs) the majority is to be spent at the two recreation Grounds.

VAT Reclaimable

Where the Parish Council incurs VAT on purchases it can be recovered however it cannot be claimed until the end of the year and so will become income in 2024/25

So, the above commitments will be funded by:

Funded By: -

Precept	60.0
Deposit Interest	1.2
VAT Recovered	5.0
Reduction in Reserves	29.4
Total Funding	<u>95.6</u>

Naturally we would like to do more, in particular in the issue of road safety and the condition of the roads throughout our parish so I will leave you with this thought: -

An extra £1,000 of expenditure would cost an additional £1.20 per year or 2.4p (less than the old sixpence for those who remember pre-decimal !) per week per Band D household on the proposed precept. So, a £20,000 increase would cost you £24 per year or 48p per week.

Herefordshire Council are promoting a scheme whereby they will fund 50% of an initiative to improve a Parish's infrastructure (like roads etc) and from the work we have looked at, for an additional commitment of some £6,000 we could resolve the issue of the longstanding Buryfields road surface concerns. If we did adopt this type of approach in future years, we could establish a programme of improving our Parish infrastructure, where Parishioners feel things need urgent improvement and we cannot get Herefordshire Council to prioritise the issue.

Whilst we all live in an uncertain financial climate; we would like your views not only on the proposed expenditure but just how much per week or year you would be willing to pay extra in order to improve the service we can offer.

Comments are welcome by the 23rd January 2023 via our website www.cradleyparishcouncil.gov.uk or by email to the clerk clerkrichard@cradleyparishcouncil.gov.uk all of which will be taken into account when we finalise the budget and set the Precept at our February meeting.

Cllr Terry Robshaw - Chair