

WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL**West Swindon Parish Council Precept 2021- 22****1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Parish Councils set a precept for collection in the Council tax on an annual basis. For the precept setting process, Parish Councils use a figure described as the tax base. This means that the Parish Council can set a figure for the overall precept with an awareness of how much this will cost residents who are charged a Band D rate.
- 1.2 In 2020, the Parish Council the estimated Council Tax Base was 8931.4. This represented no change to the tax base from the previous year. The Council set the 2020/21 precept at a Band D equivalent of £97.82, this represented a 3% increase and generated an overall precept budget of £873,661.50.
- 1.3 A comparison of rates set by other Parish Council's needs to note that many parishes vary in size, efficiencies of scale and the range of services provided to the community. A sample comparison of Band D rates for 2020 is as follows:

Stratton Parish Council £187.98
 Highworth Town Council £159.25
 Wroughton Parish Council £150.66
 Chiseldon Parish Council £139.94
 Central Swindon North £128.96
 Central Swindon South £125.89
 South Marston Parish Council £110.37
West Swindon Parish Council £97.84
 Haydon Wick Parish Council £91.23
 Wanborough Parish Council £89.08
 Stanton Fitzwarren Parish Council £85.20
 Blunsdon Parish Council £79.89

- 1.4 In 2021, the estimated Council Tax Base has reduced by 0.6% and has been calculated as **8873.3** equivalent band D dwelling. See **Appendix A**. This reflects the impact of changes in growth assumptions, the number of households receiving single persons discount and/or other discounts and exemptions. The Council Tax Support grant totalling £22,053 is also confirmed.
- 1.5 Based on planned expenditure for 2021-22, it is proposed that a **3% increase** is applied to the Precept budget. This will set the Band D equivalent to **£101.41** representing an increase of **£3.59** and creating an overall precept income of **£899,871.86**. Details are set out in this report.

2. **Background**

- 2.1. West Swindon Parish Council has no independent revenue such as community buildings, pitches, or sports facilities and therefore income is mostly reliant on the Precept and external grants.
- 2.2 In planning the annual budget, the Parish Council is mindful of ensuring that it bridges the gap between future years expenditure to ensure that residents are not presented with a huge increase from one year to the next.
- 2.3 After the Precept for 2020-21 was formally agreed, the Parish Council received notice from its contractor – Streetsmart. This meant that the Parish Council had to make a decision on how future services would be provided and ensure this process was in place within the four month notice period. The Parish Council had already conducted an independent value for money review and as a result was aware of the costs and implications associated with providing all services in house. It has meant that the original projected precept costs have had to be realigned during the course of the financial year.
- 2.4 Due to restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the Parish Council saw some planned costs for 2020-21 reduce. These included reductions in staffing levels by the Parish's Contractor and across other projects such as the Youth Club and grant to West Swindon Library. It should be noted that the changes noted in 2.2 and 2.3 mean that some costs for 2020-21 and planned expenditure in 2021-22 may not be directly comparable.
- 2.5 In anticipation of the set up costs, the Council secured approval for a Public Works loan of £76,000. The release of the loan funds has not yet been requested by the Parish Council and is available up to September 2021.
- 2.6 The precept budget expenditure for 2020-21 is set out in summary form as **Appendix B.**

3. **Planned Expenditure for 2021-22:**

- 3.1 The Parish Council directly employs twelve staff across its administration and delivery services. Temporary staff are also used. By the start of the next financial year, the Parish Council plans to complete a relocation from its office base in the West Swindon Library and depot at Waterside Park in Cheney Manor, to bring the Parish team together in one place in West Swindon.
- 3.2 The main area of expenditure for the Parish Council now and in the future, is the ongoing maintenance of West Swindon's environment. This includes public parks, play areas, hedges and open spaces, plus, general street cleaning duties such as litter bin renewal and emptying, removal of fly tipping and graffiti.
- 3.3 The Parish Council hopes that delivering services directly rather than through a contractor, and, operating from a base in West Swindon will ensure that the team can be more responsive to local issues. The Parish Council is restricted to

deliver only those services that it has formally agreed to deliver in a legal agreement with Swindon Borough Council. Services such as large scale flytipping, trees and pavement and highway related work remain outside of the Parish Council's remit.

- 3.4 Alongside the environmental and recreational work, the Parish Council continues to allocate grants for community groups and services. This includes grant funding to the West Swindon Library for 16 extra staffed opening hours each week to support access to the library for local residents.
- 3.5 Each year, the Parish Council has budgeted for improvements to play facilities. In 2021, it aims to jointly fund improvements to the skate park at Rivermead and include the creation of a BMX pump track on this site.
- 3.6 The Parish Council will continue to support volunteering with the Clean and Green Fund. This Fund rewards volunteer hours with a contribution to a neighbourhood fund for local environmental improvements.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Established in 2017, the Parish Council is relatively new to the delivery of its services. Significant changes in 2020 resulting in the in-house delivery model has necessitated a degree of estimation in running costs for the next financial year.
- 4.2 The Parish Council is aware that an increase of 1% on the 2020 precept generates £8736 new income. Future decisions on new expenditure will include reference to the precept.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1. It is recommended that the Council reviews and agrees the budget allocations proposed in **Appendix B**.
- 5.2. It is recommended that this Committee agrees to adopt the proposed budget (**Appendix B**) and thereby sets the Precept for 2021-2022 at £899,871.86 .

Paula Harrison
Parish Manager