

Great Shelford Parish Council

The Parish Precept 2016-17

The Parish Council, like the District and County Councils, raises money for its expenditure from your council tax. The Parish Council element of the council tax is called the Parish Precept.

Every year, at this time, the Parish Council is required to submit its budget. This year the Parish Council has submitted a precept requirement of £185,000. This represents an annual rise of about £31.05 for a band D property, or £2.58 per month (less for band A-C properties, more for bands E-H). You will certainly want to know why we have asked for this rise, so the parish council would like to explain the reasons behind it.

The biggest issues within the parish this year have been traffic and our roads – pedestrian and cyclist safety, congestion, parking, road rage incidents and delivery lorries. We're all familiar with the problems. Unprecedented numbers of parishioners have turned out to give their views, or commented online. We have held a number of meetings and consultations, and these have resulted in a raft of proposals designed to alleviate some of the problems: a zebra crossing, new speed limits, revision of road markings, speed awareness signs / markings and PCSO traffic parking enforcement. Unfortunately, with the current spending constraints on the County Council, it is clear that County Highways funding for these improvements simply isn't available: the parish council has therefore emphasized, in all these discussions, that the parish's only option is to fund them itself. We believe that the support expressed by parishioners for these measures has come with acceptance of this cost. To fund the proposals requires an increase of £35,730 in the parish's highways budget.

Another issue that has come to the forefront this year is the village's provision of recreation space and play equipment. We have a Playscape project which is well under way, to address the play equipment issue. It will be funded largely by appeals and grants, but inevitably any parish project requires some funding from the Parish Council. We are also forwarding a project to make the riverbank at the bottom of the recreation ground secure, more useable and environmentally friendly for village residents. This, too, will be largely grant-funded. But the fact is that, for a village with a population of over 4,000 we are woefully short of recreation space. We have been negotiating for some time in the hope of buying the field beside the recreation ground, Grange Field. Protected reserves (Section 106 contributions received from local building developments) of £47,735 have been set aside for supporting any potential purchase and can only be used for provision of recreational facilities. However, we wish to increase the parish's reserves by a further £12,265 to ensure that we are in a financial position to grasp the opportunity, if the land becomes available. The acquisition of Grange Field would be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the village, and we simply can't afford to miss it.

So far, we have only discussed increases in budget. Mindful of the above increases, we have tried, as far as possible, to reduce costs compared with previous years: the budgets for the pavilion, the cemetery, administration and contributions to local groups (£137 Grants) have all been reduced. We also seek, wherever possible, to apply for grants, or assistance from the County and District Councils. However, there comes a point where we are left with the alternatives of financing improvements ourselves, by raising money from the precept, or of abandoning the improvements. We feel that all the items mentioned above will greatly benefit the village and improve the quality of life. Great Shelford is deservedly a very popular village, because of its vibrant community and excellent facilities. However, growth and popularity bring pressures with new challenges that call for creative solutions. The Parish Council is seeking to do everything in its power to make sure the village continues to be a good place to live.

We do not lightly choose to raise your council tax. We hope you feel that the improvements will be to your benefit.

Here are the detailed figures for next year s budget:

ALLOCATION	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017
	Budget	Budget
Recreation Ground	£17,360	£21,999
Cemetery	£6,935	£5,995
Allotments	£13	£0
Highways	£37,250	£72,980
Pavilion	£23,625	£17,185
Plant & Tools	£7,700	£7,430
Administration	£47,420	£46,260
S137 Grants	£15,675	£13,772
Reserves general	£0	£12,265
Reserves protected (S106)	£0	£47,735
Gen Contingency	£18,735	£18,896
BUDGET TOTAL	£174,713	£264,516
Underspend from 2014 / 15	£-49,713	
Precept 2015 / 2016	£125,000	
Forecast Underspend 2015 / 2016	£-31,781	£-31,781
S106 Receipts 2015 / 2016	£-47,735	£-47,735
PRECEPT 2016 / 2017		£185,000

Notes:

- a) Rec. Ground, increase of £4,639 for the Riverbank Project, subject to £40,000 of Grant funding and cricket ball protection netting for recreation ground users.
- b) Cemetery, decrease of £940 from previous year.
- c) Highways, increase of £35,730 for the improvements identified, subject to £11,500 of Grant funding and £5,000 funding for the Christmas Street Illuminations from local businesses or supporters.
- d) Pavilion, decrease of £6,440 from previous year.
- e) Administration, £1,160 decrease from previous year.
- f) S137 Grants (Contributions to local groups), decrease of £1,903 from previous year.
- g) Reserves, increase of £12,265. In 2015/2016 the Parish Council has received Section 106 funds of £47,735. These are protected funds for recreational developments and cannot be used to subsidise other Parish Council spending. The additional funding of £12,265 takes the Reserves to £60,000 which is less than is considered necessary to provide a reserve fund for the future year s objectives. However, additional Section 106 funds in 2016/2017 and contributions from the precept of future years may accrue to support this reserve fund.