

The Coming Year: Annual Plan and Precept setting

At the end of 2016 the Parish Council agreed its annual plan and set the budgets for the 2017-18 financial year to make its precept request to AVDC in January. Increases in the previous two years means the budget is at a level where additional responsibilities and some ageing parish assets can be properly managed.

The 2017-18 precept will increase slightly by 1.5%, bringing it to £314,840. Consequently, the Parish Council portion of Council Tax for a Band D home will be £138 for the year (an increase of £1.87).

Below are some of the our plans for the coming year. The Parish Council website has full details of the Annual Plan, including a detailed breakdown of the budgets used to set the precept.

Village maintenance

Following the departure of the village handyman at the end of 2016, we are reviewing village maintenance. Several options are being assessed. Providing a good customer service will be the priority and allowance for a budget increase has been included.

Parking

We are working with Buckinghamshire County Council and Chiltern Railways to resolve problems caused parking on the Thame Road. Some flexibility in the current year's budget means we can contribute towards the cost of a feasibility study and urgent restrictions needed on the Thame Road. As this will continue beyond April 2017, there may be calls on our finances to ensure that restrictions on residential roads progress.

Trees and streetlights

As the need to maintain and/or replace ageing streetlights and trees in many areas of Haddenham has increased, we have set aside reserves and increased budgets. Many streetlights are being converted to LED – an additional expense in the short-term – will result in longer-term savings.

New development means new facilities, but we need help

The budget allows us to seek professional help with the detailed planning applications for the Airfield and Aston Road sites. As part of these developments we will be responsible for new recreational facilities, including football pitches, cricket pitches, play areas and parkland. We are negotiating with the developers and – following design advice – we have already succeeded in improving the Airfield site. We have also included the cost of a new burial ground for the village over the next 3-4 years. There will also be an on-going need for planning, design and project management to deliver these new facilities.

Devolved services

In 2015 we took on responsibility from the county council for cutting grass verges. We have since been improving this service by increasing the number of cuts from 6

to 10 per year. With budget cuts and a potential move to a unitary authority, it is likely that additional service responsibilities will be offered to parishes. Therefore we have included a devolved services budget as a new reserve in preparation and to pay for ad-hoc projects, where restricted county council budgets reduce the ability to achieve.

Where have we saved money?

This year allotment plot holders group volunteers began a project to install a borehole on the allotment site. The Parish Council prime funded this to allow work to start, and subsequent fundraising has made a significant contribution towards the cost. The borehole should be operational in the spring, saving around £1,500 a year in water charges.

The 2016/17 budget included £20,000 to update the Neighbourhood Plan. However, we realised when the draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan ('VALP') was published that it would not be worth spending this money until plans for Haddenham became more certain. Therefore we have allocated this money to a reserve for 2017-18, reducing the budget to £5,000. This will provide the £25,000 needed to update the Neighbourhood Plan once the VALP details are known or use it for representation at the public inquiry for the VALP if it is thought necessary.