**Budget Precept Report**

The budget precept sub-group met on the 29th November to consider the RFO’s proposals for the budget precept going forward. The budget presented for consideration at the Council meeting represents that which was agreed by the sub-group.

This budget has projected income and expenditure for the period to 2027 and considers the potential future growth and development of the village. However, as the future is unknown and uncertain, any significant changes will, as a matter of course, be built into future budget planning.

The group considered the budget under the following headings:

**Administration**

This is expenditure that is necessary for the proper function of the Parish Council. This includes the staff costs, hire of office and meeting facilities, telephone, liability insurance and such like. It also includes an allocation for the maintenance of facilities within the village, as well as allocations for community grants and donations.

Some costs have been adjusted in line with expenditure over the last couple of years, and a few costs have been adjusted up in expectation of inflation plus price rises. There are two items to note:

* We are waiting for the insurance renewal quote, hopefully to be received before the meeting
* A new budget for planning costs has been included in anticipation of future projects
* A provision of £2,000 for the continuation of the Social Media Manager has been added as this seems to be working very well
* The donations and grants budgets have been increased in order to be able to help community groups a bit more
* The refuse collection budget has been increased slightly to allow for the provision of more bins
* The staffing budget has been calculated for the Clerk at 28 hours and a Deputy at 30 hours. This should give some flexibility if a Deputy and admin assistant are retained.

**Footway Lighting**

This is a non-income generating activity and comprises of the cost electricity, repairs and maintenance. We are on a fixed rate contract at present which is due to end in July 2025.

**Projects**

The Council is undertaking several major projects and the sub-group concluded that an increase in the budget for additional and unexpected costs would be advisable.

**Land Management**

The Council has acquired by purchase, lease and through Section 106 agreement, land for the recreational benefit of the community. This land as well as future acquisitions of land and facilities will require greater amounts of expenditure if they are to be effectively managed and maintained.

Asset maintenance now has its own budget but there are plenty of repairs, maintenance, and small project work needed outside this. Due to the considerable cost increases over the past couple of years for materials some small increases to the internal budgets were made

**Grass Cutting**

The Council undertake delegated function grass cutting of verges on behalf of Norfolk County Council. The expenditure on this is more than covered by the funding received from NCC.

Other pieces of land, both owned and leased, require regular grass cutting throughout the year. A larger than inflation increase has been calculated this year due to large increases over the past couple of years.

**Cemetery Income**

The budget income amount from the Cemetery is reduced this time because of a fall in income for 2023/24. There have been several years of surplus income but this cannot be relied upon.

**Traffic Management**

The Council has long held ambitions to make a difference to the traffic issues in and around the village and therefore this budget line is to accrue enough money to provide a pedestrian crossing near the school. Any surplus funds will be used for further traffic management solutions along The Street.

**Asset Maintenance and Replacement**

As mentioned earlier, there is now a separate fund put aside specifically for the maintenance, repair and replacement of all the Council’s assets, including: streetlights, benches, play equipment, sheds and other buildings.

**Allotments**

This is a self-financing activity where income received through the plot fees levied adequately cover the costs of maintaining this facility. If there are any surplus funds remaining, these will be transferred to the allotments reserve which will provide for any future capital development needs for this facility.

**Summary**

The parish precept was increased in 2023/24 by 8.9% to £149,880. The budget that is being presented for 2024/25, £162,620, represents an increase in real terms of 8.5% but with the increase in the Council Tax base (number of dwellings in the village) will represent an increase of 6.3% on the Parish element of the bill or about £5.58 per household for the year, £0.46 per month. The budgets for 2025-26 and 2026-27 have been based on an expected small increase in costs over the 2 years, averaged out at 4%, but the anticipated increase in the Council Tax base will produce a lower increase on the Parish element of the bill.

C Dickson – Deputy Clerk and RFO.