

Walton Parish Precept 2022/23

Colleagues,

Allan has received details of the process and timeline for setting the precept from Carlisle City Council. The timeline given means that our scheduled January meeting would be too late to set the Walton Parish precept. Therefore, we will need to agree the 2022/23 budget and the proposed precept in our November meeting (09/11/2021).

This is not a big issue, as we already had a preliminary discussion at our last meeting and the significant points have not changed. The proposed budget, and precept to reflect this, will be circulated to you with the papers for the November meeting so that we can discuss and agree then, but I thought it would be sensible to highlight again some key points:

(1) **Grass Cutting** - Whilst the contract is being tendered for 2022/23, we cannot know the final price until January. Allan is including a figure of £4000 in the proposed budget for 2022/23 as a best estimate at this stage.

(2) **Play Area** - There will be a separate paper outlining options for discussion in our November meeting but we also need to correct an omission in current budget plans. This was highlighted at the last Council meeting. For the last 10 years, no provision has been made for the repairs and maintenance of the Play Area equipment. A small £50 budget line is there to pay for the annual inspection. This is a financial risk to the Council. To date, we have relied on the good will of Councillors and others to fix things as they are identified. Going forward, it would be prudent to establish a new budget line to fund a dedicated reserve for future action when needed. A budget line of £300 per annum is proposed.

(3) **Use of Reserves** - As Allan highlighted at the last meeting, the Council holds a General financial reserve (currently £13,650) which is significantly greater than recommended by Government guidance. At present, our reserve could fund about 18 months of Council expenditure as opposed to the 6 months recommended.

We need to decide what action to take. Maintaining a reserve is prudent but an excessive reserve is a cost to the current Parish population. Currently, the cost of grass cutting and cost of action on the Play Area have not been finalised. So, should these two costs exceed the budget provision it is recommended that the Council draws upon the financial reserve to cover any funding deficit in FY2022/23.

(4) **Parish Precept** - If we agree the actions above then the Parish precept for 2022/23 needs to rise by 3.2%. We will need to see what happens in the course of 2022/23 notably around Grass-cutting to determine a more realistic budget for future years and any impact on the Parish Precept for April 2023

Hope all this makes sense, but Allan or I can talk through directly if needed.

Thanks

GS