

Bishops Lydeard & Cothelstone Parish Council

Budget 2024-25

The Parish Council has now agreed the budget for 2024-25.

Despite reducing or eliminating some services, it has been necessary to increase the Precept (the amount parishioners are required to pay each year as part of their council tax) by 21.9%. This is regrettable but has mainly been caused by increases in two specific costs.

The Parish Council will no longer fund hanging baskets (although the Council is seeking to replace those with less expensive ways of providing plants and summer colour). The costs of the Lengthsman are expected to rise as services are devolved from Somerset Council as part of its budget setting process. The cost of emptying dog bins is also expected to increase along with the Clerk's salary caused by inflation and a period without a Clerk in 2023/24. Expenditure on environment projects has been eliminated.

The two significant cost increases for 2024-25 relate to the cost of audit and election costs for Parish Councillors.

At the AGM in 2023, concerns were raised over the Annual Governance and Accountability Return ('AGAR'). Two concerns were raised by parishioners and that necessitated the appointment of external accountants to investigate the complaints. It is not known how much this work will cost but a budget of £12,500 (including regular external audit) has been set for this work. That represents an increase of £10,000 in the costs expected for the 2023/24 year.

It is also anticipated that one or more elections to the Parish Council and/or a parish poll will be required in 2024/25 so the costs of these have been budgeted at £8,000 – double the amount estimated to be spent in 2023/24.

Parish finances remain in a reasonably healthy state and the Community Infrastructure Levy (the vast majority of the funds being received from David Wilson Homes) is still largely unspent although there are plans to spend more of those funds during 2024/25.

Neal Gossage
Clerk/Finance Officer