

NORTH CRAWLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Notes on Budget Meeting held on Wednesday 13 November 2024 in the Institute

Present: Councillors Steve Garner (in the Chair), Derek Harpur and Niels Kearney;
Sheila Bushnell (Clerk and RFO)

Apologies: Councillors Laura Butterworth, Terry Smith and Jan Weatherley

The meeting had been called to discuss the budget for 2025/2026

The Clerk had previously circulated a spreadsheet detailing the current financial position and the outturn for the end of the financial year on 31 March 2025.

Following consideration of this spreadsheet, it was decided that budget amounts would remain at the same level for the next financial year, except for the following:

EXPENDITURE:

Landscape Contract: The contract with RTM which started in April 2022 was for £8,625 per annum. £8,625 has been paid so far and so no commitment has been included for the rest of this year. A 5% increase has been added to this sum for next year's budget (£9,056). It was noted that the current year was the last year of the contract. The Clerk was asked to approach RTM concerning an extension of the contract for a further two years.

Emptying Dog Bins contract: Payment for the annual dog bin emptying contract was due in January and had been confirmed at £1,274. An increase of 5% was included in the budget for next year (£1,337).

Playground equipment and maintenance: It was decided to include the following amounts in next year's budget, totalling £1,954:

Children's Play Area (Kompan)	£411.81
Adventure Play Area (Sovereign)	£377.89 (current price +5%)
R0SPA Annual Statutory Inspection	£164.00
General Maintenance	£1,000

Cemetery Water: The budget for next year was increased to £74 to match the estimated spend in the current year.

Cemetery General Maintenance: £900 was included as a commitment in the current year as the work to the path still had to be carried out.

Cemetery Management and Memorial Management software: A 5% increase in the budget was agreed for next year to allow for inflation.

Clerk's and Village Warden's salaries: Details of the national pay award applicable from 1 April 2024 were received at the beginning of November and would be backdated to April and this was a 2.5% increase. The commitment to 31.3.25 therefore included this increase and back pay. A 2.5% uplift for inflation was agreed for next year's budget taking it to £9,658.

Payroll Software (Sage): The current monthly charge for this was £10. £120 had therefore been included in the budget for next year. This was assuming that there would be no increase from Sage during the year. Sage tended to apply increases every other year and the last increase was in 2024.

Finance Software (Scribe): The annual fee for this would be received in January and so had been included as a commitment (£348). The amount in the budget for next year was increased by 5%.

Website maintenance and email addresses: An amount of £550 was included in next year's budget for 10 x email addresses and website support plus £125 for the 2-year renewal of the domain name.

Insurance: The total insurance premiums this year were £889.75 but were reduced by the contribution from the Cricket Club for the insurance of the cricket practise nets (£74.76). An amount of £900 was included in next year's budget.

Training: This budget was increased by £500 to £1,000 in anticipation of possible staffing changes.

IT Equipment: Due to the purchase of the new laptop which had maintenance included, the expenses under this heading included in the budget were:

Microsoft 365 annual subscription £125
McAfee anti-virus 2-year subscription £180

Neighbourhood Plan: An amount of £100 was included in the budget for next year in anticipation of meetings connected with the Neighbourhood Plan and Steering Group.

Community Expenditure: An amount of £1,200 was agreed for next year's budget for MKPA Play Sessions and Remembrance Day wreath.

OTHER EXPENDITURE:

Community Infrastructure Fund: It was noted that, should the application already made to the Community Infrastructure Fund for traffic control equipment be successful, the Parish Council would need to provide 50% of the project cost (£3,504). It was agreed that this was a one-off capital cost which should come from the H1 account and would not therefore have an effect on the calculation of the Precept.

Church Clock: A request had been received for a contribution to be made to the repair of the church clock. An amount of £500 had already been approved in principle at the Parish Council meeting held on 7 October 2024, subject to budget approval. As this was also a one-off donation, it was agreed that this would come from the H1 account and would not therefore have an effect on the calculation of the Precept.

Repair to children's play area surface: As had been noted in previous Parish Council meetings, Kompan had agreed to pay for 50% of the overall cost of renovating the play area surface and associated drainage work. As this was an essential repair cost, it was agreed that this amount (£3,515) should come out of the normal PC budget and would therefore be reflected in the Precept calculation.

INCOME:

Churchyard fees: This income was, by its nature, very difficult to predict but a further £2,000 had been included for the remainder of the financial year and a budget figure of £5,000 was agreed for the next year.

Interest from Bank Accounts: A budget figure of £500 was agreed for the next financial year but this was very difficult to predict giving the changes occurring to interest rates.

Donations received: An amount of £10,000 had been received from a resident in the current year towards the cost of traffic control equipment. The expenditure for this equipment had been included in the budget under Ear Marked Reserves as a commitment for this year.

EAR-MARKED RESERVES:

A summary of the Ear Marked Reserves had been circulated and it was noted that there was a balance of £4.48 left over from the Winter Warming Scheme and it was agreed this would be transferred into the General Fund. The spending of the other balances had been included in the budget.

CALCULATION OF PRECEPT:

The amount of Precept was calculated to be £28,341, subject to approval at the next Parish Council meeting. This was an increase of £6,138 from the current year. The reasons for this increase were the essential repairs needed to the playground surface and the reduction in the cemetery income in the current year which is estimated to be £3,000 lower than budgeted.

SMB/18.11.24