

## NORTH CRAWLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Notes on Budget Meeting held on Thursday 13 November 2025 in the Village Hall.

Present: Councillors Derek Harpur (in the Chair), Steve Garner (Vice Chair) Niels Kearney, Terry Smith and Laura Butterworth;  
Sheila Bushnell (Clerk and RFO) and Taj Askey (Clerk and RFO)

The meeting had been called to discuss the budget for 2026/2027

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 2026.

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:

**General Maintenance:** A commitment of £960 had been added to this year for the repair of the recreation ground fence based on a quote received in October. It was agreed that £1000 would be included in the budget for next year due to the increase in smaller jobs since the village warden had left. An example was the wooden bridge footpath from Pound Lane to the recreation ground. It had become slippery in the autumn weather and needed attention to make crossing it safe.

**Tree Maintenance:** A commitment of £500 had been added in the current year due to pending work to the trees in Nixey's Walk. Due to the increase in tree maintenance overall £250 was added to the budget for next year making a total of £950.

**Street Furniture including dog bins:** £100 had been included. It was agreed that the litter bin in the children's play area should be replaced and the budget was increased to £200 to reflect this.

**Clerk's salary:** The commitment for one salary had been included from January to March. Next year the current rate applies plus an addition of 3.2% estimate for the annual national pay award negotiated to come into effect on 1 April 2026. A 3.2% uplift for inflation had been agreed for next year's budget.

**Employer's National Insurance contributions:** An amount of £409 had been included in the budget for next year for mandatory contributions to be paid on the clerk's salary. This includes the 3.2% uplift for the national pay award.

**Payroll Software (Sage):** The current monthly charge for this is £11. As Sage increases every July, it had been assumed that it may increase a similar amount in July 2026. An amount of £141 had been included.

**Finance Software (Scribe):** Scribe had confirmed that they review each council's precept every three years "to ensure that subscriptions remain fair and proportionate to the size of the council and the level of support and resources required". As the renewal date is before 31 March 2026, there will be no increase in the 2026/27 year and it will remain at £348. However, they had calculated that the subscription for the three years from 2027 will increase from £348

to £444. The current year's precept was 33% higher than the previous year which was a significant increase but was mainly due to the unusual expenditure relating to the play area surface. Further information from Scribe had been sought and they had confirmed that, if the precept amount returns to a more normal amount the next year, there could be a review of the subscription to be paid from 2027. The banding that they use is as follows:

Precept up to Annual fee

£10,000 £288

£25,000 £372

£50,000 £444

**Website maintenance and email addresses:** A commitment of £550 was included for invoices which were expected in February/March 2025 (£50 for 10 x email addresses and £500 for website annual support). An amount of £550 had been included in next year's budget for email addresses and website support plus £125 for the 2-year renewal of the domain name. However, it should be borne in mind that the current website might not be totally compliant with the current regulations for accessibility which has become an audit requirement. X-net have been contacted about this, and the response does not seem totally confident as to when and how the current PC website will be compliant.

Hugo Fox have recently sent details of its fully compliant websites which cost £9.99 per month. This monthly price also includes up to 25 x .gov.uk email addresses (we currently pay for 10 of these each year) and a free .gov.uk domain for which the PC currently pays extra (£125 every two years). It might therefore be prudent to consider changing over to Hugo Fox.

**Insurance:** For extra clarity there are now two budget lines for Insurance – one for the PC insurance and the other for the insurance for North Crawley United Charities. Parish Council – The premium paid this year to Clear Insurance was £902.36. The Cricket Club paid the PC £85.09 as the amount due for the cricket nets insurance. The net amount was therefore £817. A total of £1,000 had been included in the budget for next year. NC United Charities - £99 was paid to Zurich for this. An amount of £110 had been included in the budget for next year.

**Stationery:** £267 had been spent this year which is an overspend. This was for:

£190 - Survey Monkey

£30 – Thank you voucher for Village Warden

£32 – General stationery

£15 – Carrying case for tablet

A commitment of £75 had been added for a letter box on the Institute, hoping that the IMC will approve this and £100 for a fire proof box for the cemetery ledgers.

**Training:** This budget was increased by £750 to £1,250 due to a new clerk in post. This included the cost of the CiLCA qualification.

**Community Expenditure:** Total expenditure under this heading is £674. This was £134 for the union flag and £20 for the poppy wreath for Remembrance Day. The remainder was £520 for the MKPA play session. A decision was made at the Parish Council meeting on 3/11/25 to end the MKPA play session due to the low numbers of children attending from North Crawley. It was

decided that an activity for slightly older village children would be arranged for fun day instead. The funds were moved from **general community expenditure** to **community organised events**. An amount of £1,000 was agreed for next year's budget for each community category.

#### INCOME:

**Churchyard fees:** This income was, by its nature, very difficult to predict but a further £1570 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:** Bearing in mind the current situation with interest rates, it is very difficult to estimate what will happen in the next year. So far £256 had been received and an amount for the rest of the year of £244 had been included. A budget figure of £450 had been included for the next year.

**Donations received:** Nothing had been included as an income for the next year.

#### EAR-MARKED RESERVES:

**NC Youth Club Funds:** £180 was included as a commitment for the prizes to the end of March bringing the total spent to £360.

**Playpark Funds:** There is £176 left in the fund. No commitment had been included in the current year, so this has been carried forward to the budget for next year.

**Traffic Control equipment:** The £10,000 donation had been spent so the balance is zero.

**Signage:** Councillor Smith proposed that noticeboards were erected at certain sites of historical importance in the village to inform residents and visitors of various wildlife species and historic sites. The idea was unanimously agreed, and a budget of £2100 was agreed for next year.

**Waste Ground:** There is a pressing need for tarmac repair to part of the surface of the waste ground. The Parish Council are also hoping to add signage to the tarmac to maintain their obligation to residents to keep the Waste Ground clear from obstruction. It was agreed that an estimated sum of £4000 be added to the budget for both.

#### Other Business:

Councillor Butterworth suggested that the bus shelter needed painting. It was decided that this could be looked at after the work to the Waste Ground.

#### CALCULATION OF PRECEPT:

The amount of Precept was calculated to be £25,251, subject to approval at the next Parish Council meeting. This was a decrease of £2,916 from the current year. The reason for this was due to no unforeseen large essential repairs.