

Guilden Sutton Parish Council

Parish councillors have agreed that the Council Tax from April 2022 will remain at the same level as the current financial year - £35.43 per year for an average Band D property. The Parish Council's total budget will be £28,319 which includes using some money from reserves. The largest items apart from staffing costs are Greenspace £4,098; Events (E.g. Village Fete, Christmas lights, Jubilee) £2,150; Grounds Maintenance £1,440; Insurance £1,365 and Grants £1,500. Within the Grants there will be up to £500 p.a. for Village Green volunteers' projects and book tokens for primary school leavers.

Residents may have expected a decrease in the precept given that, due to circumstances outside of our control, the second phase of the Green Space project was unable to continue as planned. In 2018 the Council had set the precept at around £18,000 against a budget of £22,325, so was in a deficit position. The precept was increased in 2019 to £24,000 with Phase 2 of Green Space in mind. The decisions we have taken over the last 3 years mean the precept has not increased since 2018 despite the council's costs increasing significantly in line with inflation. Had the Green Space project proceeded as planned, it is likely the Council would have needed to increase the precept significantly this year to account for PWLB loan repayments. The Council continues to support Hook's Wood with funding from reserves. We hold additional reserves to facilitate the purchase of recreation space in the future, and encourage any land owners who may be considering disposal to contact us.

Before setting the Council Tax, all 600+ households in the parish were sent a newsletter seeking their views on various options for future spending. Only 30 responses were received before the meeting. Most popular were facilities for teenagers, Village Green, and recreation space. Least popular were subsidised bus services, Voice magazine and speed cameras.

We would still welcome comments from residents on how their money should be spent, and any other suggestions for improvements. Ideas might not necessarily involve spending much money, it might just be about the way things are done. Any proposals will be considered at future parish council meetings.

The Parish Council is also considering setting up on-line conversations with residents so that there can be informal discussions outside the formal parish council meetings. It will help if we know how many people would be interested in taking part. If you are, please contact the parish clerk at guildensuttonparishclerk@gmail.com. We would particularly like to hear from young people as well as a cross-section of the community involving all ages, families, couples and single-person households.