

THE CHARLTONS PARISH COUNCIL

NOTES ON PRECEPT 2022/2023

1. Employment

Pay scales are based on the local government pay scales negotiated by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services. 'Subject to satisfactory performance, you will progress automatically through the salary scale by annual increments until you reach the maximum of the scale' (based on satisfactory performance). However, 'the Council may withhold an increment if it is considered that performance fell below the level expected, following an annual review, or award an additional increment for exemplary performance if it chooses to do so.'

In addition I have budgeted for an anticipated 2% increase in salary award backdated to 1 April 2021 and 4% increase on salary award from 1 April 2022 in accordance with advice given from the society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC). This would not be paid until confirmed by NALC following negotiation with NJC.

2. Clerk's Expenses

The mileage rate has been budgeted at **45p per mile** in line with SLCC and NALC Car Allowance for Local Council Clerks. In line with common practice, the Clerk will continue to receive £10 monthly Work from Home Allowance.

3. Other Parochial Activities

Speed Mitigation. Following the successful application for a Small Highway Improvement Scheme, the Speed Calming Reserve remains at £5,930, from which £1,500 has been agreed towards the purchase of Speed Indicator Devices (Sep Minutes, item 21/87.)

Additional Grass Cutting/Hedge Maintenance. I have carried forward £1,050 for any additional grass cutting of the verges and hedge maintenance, if required.

Lorry Watch/Village Gateway. The Lorry Watch reserve currently holds £625, the PC should consider whether any further expense is required or whether the funds can be better used on a different project, such as a village gateway in Broadway to match those included in the Small Highway Improvement Scheme and as agreed in the October minutes (item 21/100.d). If we transfer £625 from Lorry Watch to a Gateway Reserve and include an additional £245 in the precept, £870 could be held in the reserve. Any deficit towards the cost could be taken from contingencies/speed mitigation fund if necessary, or included in the budget for in FY 23/24. **[Agreed]**

The signage/defibrillator reserve currently stands at £755 for the purchase of replacement batteries/pads and any repairs to or additional signage as requested. I have included £125 to bring the total reserve up to £880.

Village Car Park. I have included £2,000 for the urgent drainage work/repairs to the village car park as requested.

Dog Waste/Grit Bins. I have included £350 for the purchase of an additional dog bin at West Charlton, if approved by SSDC and for the purchase of a new grit bin opposite Charlton Adam Post Office, which will bring the reserve to £550. As the Village Green Project has not progressed I have removed 'benches for village green' from this reserve.

Mill Pond Dredging. I have included £300 for dredging the Mill Pond as work was carried out in November 2020 and we need to bring the reserve back up for the bi-annual dredging, bringing the total to £732 (last paid £612 in Jan 21).

Christmas Trees. I have left the Charlton Adam/Mackrell Christmas Trees reserve at £943.74 with payment of £270.75 due to be paid, which will bring the total reserve to £672.99.

Website. I have included £150 to maintain the website following its launch last year.

Parish Council Laptop. As previously warned, the laptop is now 8 yrs old and is showing signs that it will need to be replaced at some point soon, therefore, I have included £700 to cover such costs.

The War Memorial/Fingerpost Reserve Fund currently stands at £2,670 for future repairs and maintenance and have included an additional £100 to continue building up the reserve. This will bring the reserve to £2,770, which will cover the costs for Forsey and Son to carry out the refurbishment works in the spring at a cost of £1,320 (incl. VAT).

Flood Mitigation Reserve Fund. I have left the reserve at £5,150 until costs are known, or a scheme is implemented through development.

Training and Elections. I have included £375 to cover the costs of a contested election in May 2022, as advised by SSDC and £300 is included for clerk/councillor training.

Rights of Way (RoW). I have included £100 for the RoW Reserve, bringing the total to £500, for any materials required to repair footpaths/footbridges and gates.

Charltons Village News (CVN). The annual contribution towards the PC's insert in the CVN remains at £300.

Parish Online. There is £100 in this year's budget to renew Parish Online at the end of January 2022. I have not included £100 in the budget for FY 22/23 as this could always be paid for from contingencies. ***[As work had already been carried out to upload data onto Parish Online, councillors agreed by a majority vote to renew in this FY and leave the decision whether to renew again in 22/23, following the PC elections in May 2022.]***

HM Queen's Platinum Jubilee. In 2012 a joint order was placed with Charlton Mackrell Primary School for HM Queen's Diamond Jubilee commemorative mugs. The school provided mugs to all the children who attended the School and the PC provided mugs to all the other children within the parish who were 17yrs old and under. Any excess mugs were available for sale at cost price from the PO and Stores. I have included £500 for the PC's share of commemorative mugs if approved. ***[Approved with the option to apply for a Community Grant from SSDC]***

4. Memorial Playing Field Maintenance

The PC will continue to reimburse The Charltons Community Centre for playing field maintenance expenditure in accordance with the criteria set out in the original arrangements by SSDC. Expenditure will be reimbursed upon receipt of all receipts relating to grass and hedge cutting within the confines of the playing fields. No other costs will be accepted. By the end of November each year, the CC treasurer would need provide me with the anticipated expenditure for the following FY so that I can include this figure in the precept. The grant would only be paid upon receipt of all invoices. I have budgeted for £2,300 as the anticipated costs for this FY. ***[It was agreed that the PC should be consulted in contract renewal process for future grounds maintenance contracts]***

5. Grants and Charitable Donations

On 16 Oct 18, the PC agreed to continue the level of grant at £1,000 for the next three years for The Charltons Youth Club, to be reviewed every three years, therefore a review of the level of grant is now due. Due to Covid-19 and the request last year from the Youth Club, the grant was increased to £1,500, therefore, I propose that the PC maintains this level of grant for the next three years, to be reviewed in Jan 2025. If the Charltons Play

Day does not proceed again this summer the PC could consider increasing the grant to the Youth Club or any other organisation in need in the Parish by £250.

I have maintained the section 137 grants at £250 (expenditure which the PC believes is in the interests of, and will bring direct benefit to, their area or any part of it or all or some of its inhabitants). Also included is £200 towards the running of the Somerton Town Library as previously agreed and £50 towards the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal/Wreath.

Following the request from The Charltons Community Centre for a grant of £15,000 over three years towards its improvements program, I have included a grant of £1,000 for FY 22/23, which added to the £550 previously approved in the July minutes, item 21/75.b., would provide a grant of £1,550 in FY 22/23. There is a greater demand on the PC to repair and maintain its own assets, having previously delayed such expense due to the substantial level of grant awarded towards the Community Centre and Memorial Hall over the last three years towards Project Charltons (£10,000). In order to achieve the grant of £1,000 in this FY I have incorporated the village day grant of £300 and the routine maintenance grant of £250. The level of grant can be reviewed again next FY. The Reading Room will continue to receive the £250 grant towards routine maintenance.
[Approved grant of £1,000 in principal pending receipt of Grant Application form from The Charltons Community Centre]

6. Precept and General Reserve (GR)

The estimated GR at 31/03/22 is £3,815 which is comfortably above the minimum reserve recommended of 25% of annual expenditure i.e., c£2,327.

The PC's precept in 2010/11 was £7,200 at which level it had been maintained for a number of years. In 2011/12 the precept was finally increased to £10,000 and in 2012/13 increased to £11,000 to carry out repairs to the War Memorial. In 2015/16 it was increased to £14,000 to carry out repairs to the car park. In 2016/17 it was necessary to raise the precept further to £14,300 to take into consideration the gradual reduction in the Local Government Grant and additional expenditure and increased last year to £14,600.

To take into account the commitment by the PC to grant £10,000 over 3 years to Project Charltons and in light of the increasing demand on Parish and Town Councils to provide and budget for additional services, the PC increased the precept in FY 20/21 to £15,500. In FY 21/22 the PC increased the precept to £16,000 to cover the costs anticipated for Lorry Watch.

Due to the requirements for remedial works in FY 22/23 and requests for grants from The Charltons Community Centre, I propose that the PC considers increasing its precept to £17,000.

This would give an increase in the PC's element of the council tax charge to each household of £2.74 for the year; a 7.28% increase.

There are hopefully ample provisions in the 2022/23 budget (including a £1,000 contingency and more than adequate GR). It is considered unlikely that the Council will be under real financial pressure during this period.

Due to the uncertainty of what the future may hold under the new Somerset Unitary Authority and the formation of Local Community Networks, Parish and Town Councils should budget accordingly to maintain an adequate level of service expected by their parishioners and aim to be proactive rather than reactive; this can only happen with a healthy level of reserves. It is also becoming more and more obvious that any grants or funding to local level will be reduced or withdrawn.

RCarter

Becky Carter
Parish Clerk

6th January 2022