

Blofield Parish Council: Notes on 2017/18 Precept

The notes refer to the calculation of Blofield Parish Council Precept 2017/18

Note A

The employee cost increase of £5600 over 2016/17 is caused by the cost to the council in 2016/17 being reduced by a refund of Statutory Maternity Pay of £4600. The 'real' increase in employee cost is £1000 which reflects an increase in hours plus a small increase in national pay scales.

Note B

The admin cost increase of £240 reflects the Clerk job-share agreed from January 2017. As both Clerks will work from home the council has agreed to pay each the allowance for use of home as office and a contribution towards telephony/broadband charges. The council is unable to provide a parish office so relies on the clerks working from home.

Note C

The council costs increase of £150 is a result of an increase in insurance premium and additional room rental charges.

Note D

The council makes a profit on the allotment rents; this offsets the administration costs and the balance will contribute to maintenance and improvements at the site. The council may not recover the full cost of the Millennium Orchard rent but agreed to underwrite the rent until the trees recover from transplanting and generate fruit sales. Overall no change this year.

Note E

The council budgets for the replacement of some office equipment – computers, printers, scanners, etc. each year. No change this year.

Note F

The increase in Subscriptions and Fees of £480 is largely attributable to the decision to join the NP Law scheme for small councils, which provides 10 hours of legal advice each year without further charge.

Note G

The council is responsible for the maintenance of the churchyard and a recent survey has identified significant repairs to the wall and a need to survey the trees and then take any actions required. Expenditure of up to £20,000 may be required in 2017/18. The council has reserves but needs to allocate funds from 2017/18 to supplement them.

The Courthouse is the council's sole property asset. It is a listed building. The Management Committee has identified the need for both maintenance and improvements and the council is setting aside money to fund works.

The costs of grass cutting and maintenance of open spaces is increasing as the council responds to requests for more work to be undertaken.

The allotment maintenance is a reserve, mainly for improvements at the site.

Note H

The council decided some years ago to change its annual contributions to the Trustees of Heathlands and of the Margaret Harker Hall and to base the contribution on the routine costs of maintenance of the grounds. This recognises the fact that the two charitable trusts provide play areas and recreation grounds which, otherwise, the council would be expected to provide. The contributions have not increased from 2016/17.

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The increase of £250 in subsidies and donations to other parish groups reflects an expected small increase in Focal Point printing costs and the level of small donations made in 2016/17.

Note I

These payments are donations the council makes to bodies that are not parish-based. They are permitted but controlled; those proposed are for the Poppy Wreath on Remembrance Day, a donation to CAB in Norwich and to organisations such as the Brundall & Blofield Good Neighbour Scheme. The increase is £100, reflecting the level of small donations made in 2016/17.

Note J

No increase to the amounts set aside as a general contingency and to contribute to the cost of a council bye-election if one is called.

Overall the precept sought increases over 2016/17 by £7220. Excluding the distortion caused by the refund of SMP (£4600) the planned expenditure has grown by £2620. The council will use reserves to meet part of the costs of works to the churchyard.

The council recognises that any increase in precept is unwelcome but believes the increase in precept will amount to under £4 a year for a Band D property, and it is important for the council to respond to the needs of the parish.

Rob Christie.
Chairman Blofield PC