

Councillor Simon Horton noted that if either the 2.99% or 4.99% increases were chosen, there would be no room for 'extras', for example the Solar Panel on the Boat House café project would become uncertain, as would the continuing provision of playgrounds in parks and the Boat House. The 9.99% increase is unfortunate, but it is realistic.

Councillor Tim Prater noted that he agreed with Councillor Simon Horton and further explained that there are parks within the parish that require new surfacing and equipment as they are nearing the end of their natural life. Surfaces alone cost in the region of £10,000 and a new set of swings can cost in the region of £6-7,000. Fremantle Park play equipment will need replacements within the next 3 to 4 years. Therefore, the parish council would need to budget for many thousands of pounds of replacement costs in the next few years.

It was noted that these costs will not be met from this budget alone but will allow for initiation of a fund to be used towards repairs and replacements. This fund could also be used as a basis for any match funding grant applications. Those savings can then be used to generate match funding for these essential repairs and replacements. Councillor Simon Horton noted that the council need to ensure that the savings were made each year. Saving £5,000 a year over the next 5 years would allow up to £50,000 in total as 50% could be match funded.

Councillor Tim Prater noted that a 9.9% increase would equate to band D householders paying an increased 8.5p per week. It was also noted that the parish council had looked internally at expenses and projects to cut before considering raising the precept. The sand pit project at the Solarium is one example of a project being postponed to save on the expense. Further internal cutbacks will need to be made and although these won't generate large sums, they will allow for enough money to replace play equipment.

It was noted that the council are not looking to raise the precept by 9.99% every year. That isn't the ethos of this council.

It was noted that Councillor Simon Horton read out the proposal to accept the 9.99% increase in the precept.

"The draft budget and proposed increase in precept to £108,788 were considered following the recommendations of the Finance Committee. The budget seeks a 9.99 % increase in the precept to £49.24 based on the Sandgate Tax base figure of 2209.56 for 2024/2025.

9.99% is a rise of Band D equivalent Precept from £44.80 to £49.24 a rise of £4.44 a year, around 8.5p per week. With that precept income and the draft budget, there is a predicted break-even budget.

Proposal. To accept the recommendations of the Finance committee that the draft budget as circulated, and proposed precept figure of £108,788 (based on a 9.99% increase)

Proposed by: Councillor Guy Valentine-Neale

Seconded by: Councillor Tim Prater

Approved by all present

6. PWLB

It was noted that the PWLB spreadsheet has been updated and was sent out to councillors as part of the monthly reports. It was important to note that the PWLB loan can only be used on specific costs, capital costs are not a permitted use.

Chairman's initials and date

The funds are currently in various bonds with high interest rates. Some of those bonds are due to mature soon and will need to be discussed at an upcoming meeting.

7. CCTV

It was noted that there is a connection issue with the CCTV due to an unknown interference. A contractor we use regularly has suggested that they purchase some equipment, at their own expense, on a trial basis to ascertain whether it will solve the issue. If the equipment does solve the problem, there will be a discussion around costs and other details. If the equipment does not solve the problem, the contractor will remove it.

The above is subject to a labour cost of £400 for the installation of the equipment. It was noted that the £400 cost could be shared across two financial years.

Proposal: To agree to the expenditure of £400 for the installation of the equipment relating to the CCTV interference.

Proposed by: Councillor Guy Valentine-Neale
Seconded by: Councillor Simon Horton
Approved by all present

8. Correspondence

None at this time

9. Information

None at this time

9. Date of next meeting: 19th February 2024

Meeting finished at 6.29pm.

Signed by Chairman of Finance Committee Dated