



COLWICH PARISH COUNCIL

Colwich Parish Council Disclosure Log

Request: CPC FOI 3/17

Subject: Precept Increase

Question

- Colwich Parish Council has increased their precept by 126% since 2013 - I was wondering if you'd be able to give me a couple of lines on what's changed since then and what extra workload you've taken on?

Response

Our precept increase was covered by BBC Midlands Today and BBC Radio Stoke in the week commencing 14th March 2016.

Between 2010/11 to 2015/16 the precept decreased from about £81,000 to £72,720 or over 10% reduction. Due to the nature of how the Council Tax demands are calculated, the final 3 years of this period saw a decrease in individual household demands even though the actual precept stayed the same. As of March 2014 the Council had £262,881 in its reserves. As of March 2016 the Council's reserves have reduced to £131,883 as they were used to provide a Multi Use Games Area; Skateboard Park; BMX track; Youth Shelter and footpath at the Jubilee Playing Field (JPF). The Council also took Legal Advice in an attempt to fight against numerous housing projects.

It became quite clear to the Council during the Finance Committee meeting of November 2015 that it was no longer viable to maintain the precept at such a low level whilst also trying to improve the parish environment for the community. Moreover, the Council had developed a Business Plan of discreet projects for the short to medium term that it wished to take forward. Moreover, it was very clear from the safety inspection undertaken during the summer of 2015 that the play equipment at the JPF was no longer fit for purpose. The Council, therefore, had a difficult decision to make. It could either use all of the reserves or it could pass the costs of these projects onto the Council Tax. The Council was mindful that it needed to keep between 3-12 months running costs in a general reserve. Consequently, the Council increased the precept to £164,492 for 2016/17.

Besides an increase in running costs, the main items covered by the increased precept were the new equipment at the children's play area at the JPF in Little Haywood and to provide a grant to the Great Haywood Memorial Hall to tarmac a car park used by hall users; parents dropping off children at the nearby school and patients attending the Hazeldene House Surgery.

The monetary increase in the precept was equivalent of about £1 per week for a Band D property rising as it did from £44.30 to £99.90 per year.

The Council has increased the precept for 2017/18 by 1.89% giving a Band D rate of £101.79 per year. The Council has decided that it wishes to continue with a Lengthsman programme even though funding from Staffordshire County Council will end in March 2017. In this respect, we are

looking to recruit a number of part-time staff to undertake minor highways works (cleaning gullies; pavements and road signs). To finance these posts the Council decided to bring a number of outsourced works back in-house and to allocate these tasks and resources to the new employees. The Council has allocated funds for a new stretch of pavement, on the main road to Stafford, following a 20+-year campaign to have an overgrown hedge cut back, as well as allocating funds for traffic calming along this same stretch of road. The Council is also looking into the possibility of providing a municipal burial ground, as the 3 local churches are running out of space, and has created a new reserve to build up the necessary funds. Equally, the Council is looking to improve the building at the JPF to support a local football team which has had to find a new "home" pitch following the National Trust's decision to discontinue with playing fields on the Shugborough Estate.

Date Received: 14th February 2017

Date Full Response: 14th February 2017

Responded within 20 working days: YES

Estimated Cost to Council: £50