

Flitwick Town Council Precept Report 2020/21

This year's increase in the precept for the Town will raise an estimated additional £41,000, taking the total to around £854,000 for the year. For the Town Council element of Council Tax, householders in the Band D category will see an increase of £5.39 over the course of the full year - equivalent to a couple of coffees at a local coffee shop or just over 10p extra a week per household.

The Council is conscious that the increase is above the current inflation rate, which has been our guiding measure for the past few years. The recent years have seen significant additional contributions to the precept from new housing development in the town, which has enabled us to keep precept increases to a minimum, while maintaining the range and level of services that we are able to offer. In the last 12 months the development of new houses has slowed down so our revenue base has stayed static. We also require additional funding to enable a number of key projects and additional events to be undertaken.

We are committed to investing in the fabric and management of our base at The Rufus Centre, which is necessary to protect future revenue streams from the rental of both tenanted offices and conference, meetings and events space, which enable us to offer free/reduced rates to local organisations and charities.

Over two years around £120,000 will be spent on The Rufus Centre, installing a permanent café on site for use by all residents, as well as visitors to the Centre itself. Our aging IT kit is being renewed and the Wi-Fi service upgraded within the building. Redecoration of our conference and meeting rooms with new furniture, as well as refurbishment of the toilet facilities, will all be completed within the next 12 months. We have launched a new Rufus Centre website to promote the wide range of facilities available and have employed a full time Rufus Centre Manager to drive the commercial revenue that the Centre provides as a invaluable top up to the precept.

We have also agreed to establish formal budgets that will enable us to take over the delivery of the annual Remembrance Service and to establish the basis for funding a Christmas lights switch on in 2020 and stage a wider range of events for the local community to enjoy.

We will continue to invest in services for young people at the Youth Hub and support a wide range of local youth organisations, either through the provision of low-cost facilities or direct grant funding.

We are also budgeting for capital investment in renewing playground equipment and the continued maintenance and active improvement of green spaces. Having invested in CCTV to protect our Town Centre assets, we will continue to work closely with the Police to take other sensible measures to manage anti-social behaviour.

Resident Driven Projects, where you suggest and drive publicly voted for initiatives, will also continue to feature in the next 12 months, allowing direct input into our spending plans to help shape the Flitwick that you want.

If we have learned anything from 2019, it's that we need to provide better communication with all our residents, organisations and businesses, to ensure improved visibility of, and accountability for, the decisions we make on your behalf and the processes that sit behind them. We will continue to deliver our monthly Flitwick Papers magazine to every household, to keep you all in touch with what is going on in the Town (but we will be giving it a thorough make-over) and we are just finalising the re-launch of a new Flitwick Town Council website which we aim to make the focus of information not just about the work of the council, but as a platform for individuals, organisations and businesses to use to highlight all the events, activities and services available in our local area.

The Town Council is committed to providing services and developing facilities that will benefit all members of our community whilst ensuring we achieve best value from our budget. We are fortunate to have a strong community spirit in Flitwick and we look forward to working together with residents to help to build on this further in 2020.

Cllr Phillip Thompson

Town Mayor