

Introduction

This paper provides a narrative for all proposed budgets for 2022/23.

Recommended budgets are broken down into Income and Expenditure sections and are based on past actuals and anticipated projects/works.

This paper should be read with the budget paper (produced from the accounting software) showing last year's budget and actuals (2020/21), this year's budget and actuals to date (2021/22) and in the final column the proposed budgets for 2022/23 based on this paper

Guidance from SLCC: *The budget, approved annually, is the principal tool by which the council controls how its money is spent. It is also the council's primary planning tool, so that the budget setting process should be used to consider what the council is seeking to achieve, the major issues it faces and how it is going to address them.*

Action - F&A is recommending the attached 22/23 budget and Precept to Council for agreement. Please see pg9 for summary recommendation
F&A also recommends revised Earmarked Reserve allocations as described on Pg9

Income

115 VAT Reclaimed

VAT is reclaimed 6 monthly, and is dependent on expenditure. **Suggest budget £10,000.**

1000 Misc Receipts

This includes any receipts such as grant income, refunds of payments made etc

Suggest budget remain £1000

1010 WRC/SVR Rent

We receive £375 a month in rent, budgeted £375x12 = **£4,500**

1011 WRC/SVR Rebate utilites

Regularly we invoice SVR for utilities, cleaning and shared maintenance costs at a 30/70% split. Based on previous 2 years **£900.**

1020 Meeting Room income

During Covid meeting room bookings have been lower but the hope is that we can return to hiring out the rooms more, **retain budget £400**

1030 CiL Receipts

We have received several CiL monies, which are received into this account code and then held in an EMR. As we do not know when we will receive CiL funds recommend **Budget £0**

1040 Community Café Receipts

During Covid we have been unable to run community cafes but we hope that the Community Café can resume at some point. Recommend **Budget £240**

1050 Groombridge Play area Fundraising

Whilst we are actively fundraising we do not know what we will receive but an application has been made for £100,000. **Suggest budget £100,000.**

1060 Groombridge Post Office Fundraising

This was set up for the resident donation received in 2020/21 of £10K for the post office initiative. As we do not know if we will receive further donations **budget £0**

1061 Groombridge Post Office Building Purchase **NEW CODE**

One off in 2021/22 therefore £0 in 2022/23.

1062 Groombridge Post Office Residential rent **NEW CODE**

Conservative estimate £1,600 pcm. ***Budget £19,200***

1090 Bank Interest

Recommend retain budget ***£100***

1076 Precept

In 2021/22 this has been £156,053. We normally calculate this as expected expenditure minus income, ensuring general reserves are within guidelines. ***Recommend £163,253*** to balance budget

Expenditure

Please note the following are all net costs as we are able to reclaim VAT (allocated to and shown in separate VAT income and VAT expenditure codes)

515 VAT on Payments

This is the VAT that correlated with any VAT-able expense listed below. ***Budget £10,000 to match 115***

4000 Staff Salary

Staff Committee reviewed this budget and agreed ***Recommended budget £40,506***

4001 Staff on costs

Expenditure includes:

- Payroll services
- Tax and NIC (these fluctuate according to hours worked)
- The Clerks are enrolled in the NEST Pension Scheme, at an employers' contribution of 10% of the contractual hours salary bill.

Staff Committee reviewed this budget and agreed ***recommended budget £9,845.***

4003 Parish Maintenance Contract

In July 2021 the PM person resigned and we were not successful in recruiting a replacement. We have been using the services of a contractor as and when required. Staff Committee reviewed this arrangement and agreed to continue it. ***They recommended retain budget budget £3,650.***

4005 Clerks Clerical support & Overtime

Staff Committee would like to see reduced overtime for staff, but recognise that this may be difficult and/or that specialist office support could be helpful. Staff Committee therefore reviewed this budget and agreed ***retain budget of £3,750.***

4006 Neighbourhood plan expenditure

In 2017/18 Council agreed to not proceed with a NHP due to protections from the Ashdown Forest zone, however Planning Committee may wish to review this in the light of recent developments. ***Recommend budget £500 to allow some initial research/scoping.***

4007 Training

Due to Covid, training has been virtual and this has incurred a lower cost. Whilst the Staff Committee recognises that virtual training will continue, it recognises the importance of an adequate training budget for staff and councillors. ***Recommends budget £2,500***

4008 Annual subs inc SALC and NALC

ESALC has not yet confirmed subscriptions to ESALC and NALC, in 2021/22 they were £931. Also:

- AiRS £50
- Local Councils magazine subs £17
- Data protection registration (ICO) £40
- SLCC membership Clerk & Assistant Clerk £180
- WDALC £31

Recommend retain budget £1,400

4009 Conferences and networking

Due to Covid conferences/networking has not taken place or has been virtual. Whilst the Staff Committee recognises that virtual events will continue it recognises the importance of an adequate budget for staff and councillors ***Recommends budget £500 and review for 2023/24***

4010 Chairman's Allowance

This covers expenditure undertaken by the Chair in the course of her duties such as wreaths, public events, gifts for people that have supported the Parish Council voluntarily etc. This has been the same figure since 17/18. ***Budgeted £1,300***

4011 Councillor's Allowances

This is paid to all elected Councillors on a twice yearly basis to contribute to expenses incurred. Based on the current 8 elected councillors ***recommend retain £1,300***.

4012 Parish Office Rent

We pay £1,250 per month in advance (£625 to each of our 2 landlords). ***Our annual rent is therefore £15,000***.

4013 Telephone/Broadband

We currently pay our IT contractor for our broadband and phone around £80-£90/month. We have a mobile phone which was used by the PMP, which is on a contract of £7.50 pcm. ***recommend retain budget £1,200***.

4015 Office Stationery & non-electric equipment

This covers stamps, notepads, pens, copier paper etc. Also e.g. parish office furniture, blinds, stationery for APA, shredding and business cards. ***Recommend maintaining budget £1,500***.

4016 Software/Hardware

As well as software such as our accounting and mapping packages this includes any IT related items that are needed. ***Recommend retain £1,000***.

4017 Photocopier lease/Maintenance

We are about to go in to the third year of a 3 year copier lease. The costs are £167 +VAT/quarter = £668. The costs for actual copies is less predictable but is around £30-40/month = £480 when all staff members are in the office. ***Recommend retain budget £1,200***.

4018 Website

The new website has an annual hosting fee (c£250). ***Recommend budget of £250***.

4019 Community Communication

Anticipate £100 per church for inclusion of Parish notes. Also printing of 3 newsletters/bulletins. Due to Covid we have had to pay for postage as well rather than using volunteers but it is hoped that we can return to volunteer help. There may be some costs incurred for advertising meeting rooms. **Recommended £1,500.**

4020 APA expenditure

Due to Covid we may don't know if an APA will be possible again. **Recommend retain budget of £750.** This includes any hall hire, rather than splitting with code 4031 'APA Hall Hire'.

4021 IT support

IT support at £200/month. Any IT training or support to be taken from 4007 Training. **Recommend budget £2,400.**

4030 Hire of Halls

Covid requirements for social distancing has meant that we have had to hire halls for public meetings from time to time. . **Recommend budget £400**

4038 Insurance

Buildings and parish council insurance £1,366 in 2021/22. **Recommend budget £1,400**

4040 Audit and Legal fees

Fees in this year have included the post office CIC lease. Our audit fees have been £725 for internal and external audit. We will need to renegotiate the lease on the Old Station (responsibility for ours and landlords' legal fees) and the underlease to SVR. **Recommend budget £1,500.**

4041 Staff Committee

Staff Committee Terms of Reference includes a **budget of £500.**

4051 Community Resilience

Allows updating/disseminating of information around community resilience. We are keen to review this area in the light of Covid response. **Recommend retain budget £400**

4060 Election expenses

Suggested retain £1,000 as previously done each year in case it is necessary.

4061 Parish Action Plan and projects

There should be sufficient budget lines in place to fund parish plan related work. **Suggest budget £0.**

4062 Withyham Parish Volunteers

Also see EMR from unspent Wealden Strategic Partnership grant. Due to Covid, volunteer projects have not been taking place as much as before but we hope to see them resume **Recommend retain £500.**

4063 Community Warden

Currently 12 hours per month, this equates to 3 sessions per month and also some hours over the year to allow for additional/one off requirements. Covid meant reduced hours for the part of the year which is why budget is underspent in 21/22. **Suggest budget £2,000.**

4064 Community café expenditure

During Covid we have been able to run community cafes but we hope that the Community Café can resume at some point. **Recommend Budget £240 to replenish catering supplies etc (see income 1040 we ask each group that runs a community café to contribute to this)**

4101 Grants

Since 2017/18 the budget for grants has been £10,000. **Recommend retain at £10,000.**

4102 Queens Celebrations

Council agreed to refurbish the old gas lamp and have it installed on Parish Council land at Newton Willows with a plaque to commemorate the Queen's celebrations in June.

Recommend budget £800

4106 Youth Activities

GYP no longer operating and currently no defined projects. **Recommend £0.**

4107 Older People

No defined projects. **Recommend £0.**

4200 Recreation Ground Rent

In 2021/22 rent on Groombridge Recreation Ground was £302 **Recommend budget £310.**

4201 Recreation Ground Purchases

No known purchases required, suggest retain budget of **£200.**

4202 Recreation Ground repairs

This may include fence works and other small items of repair. **Suggest budget of £500.**

4205 Mowing Groombridge including the Tanyard

Landscape Services is our current contractor based on expected expenditure in 2022/23 **recommend budget £6230.**

4211 Waste collection service

This covers 5 waste bins across the Parish for their weekly emptying at a flat annual charge of £234.38 per quarter in 2021/2. Allow for a small percentage increase **Recommend £1,000**

4213 Dog waste collection

This covers 7 dog bins across the Parish for their weekly emptying at a flat annual charge. This is currently £437.50 per quarter. Allow for a small percentage increase **recommend £1,850.** If new dog bins were required WPC would incur those costs and this would not allow a budget for these, however none have been identified.

4220 Play area repairs/surface/replace

The playground renewal group are looking at installation in 2022/23 once funds are raised. There may be a requirement for minor repairs in the meantime. Suggest a retain **budget of £200**

4221 Playground Purchases

Should fundraising be successful the play area would be realised in 2022/23. See income 1050 estimated at £100,000, purchases would directly correlate with any funding received **Suggest budget £100,000 balancing with income.**

4222 Playground – inspection Groombridge

The annual inspection charge is around £100 ***Recommend budget £100***

4225 Park Corner Pond

This land is owned by Eridge Estate, and we have a licence ***Recommend retain £100***

4226 ESCC Devolution

Council has agreed to pay ESCC for an additional 4 urban cuts in 2021/22 at £957 ***recommend budget £957.***

4230 Trees

A professional tree survey was last undertaken May 2021 and works carried out from that. The next survey will be due November 2022 and there may be further requirements for tree surgery from that with timelines depending on severity. ***Recommend budget at £1,500***
On a maintenance basis the Grass, Tree and Hedge Policy details annual maintenance requirements for the hedge at Teasley Mead (from 4260) and cuts of epicormic growth of the limes by volunteers.

4231 Station Road fence

We continue to wait for the hedge to establish sufficiently to train the hedge into a living fence and remove the chainlink. ***Recommend retain £0.***

4240 Maintenance of the Reading Room land.

Landscape Services is our current contractor based on expected expenditure in 2022/23 ***Suggest budget £607***

4241 Maintenance Manor Pound.

WPC has a 99 year lease to 2093. There has been no maintenance in over 8 years. ***Suggest £500*** (hedge work)

4260 Mowing and hedge Teasley Mead

Landscape Services is our current contractor and grass cutting is based on expected expenditure in 2022/23. Hedge policy shows an annual cut of the hedge, which is £300-£400. ***Suggest retain budget £1,300.***

4261 Mowing of Balls Green

Landscape Services is our current contractor based on expected expenditure in 2022/23 ***Suggest budget £400.***

4265 Rental of Teasley Mead

The rental is based on Wealden District Council's Charges Book, and charges can go up or down. For the past few years it has been £50, ***recommend £50.***

4266 Rental Balls Green

The rental is based on Wealden District Council's Charges Book, and charges can go up or down. For the past few years it has been £50, ***recommend £50..***

4268 Balls Green Play ground – repairs

Extensive works were carried out in 17/18 and any repairs should be nominal. ***retain £100***

4270 Playground Inspection Balls Green and Teasley Mead

Based on past inspection charges ***Recommend budget £200.***

4401 Wealdlink Bus Service

Wealdlink has requested £548 for 2022/23 ***recommend budget £548***

4402 External Furniture Repairs

Benches. Not aware of maintenance required but **recommend budget £200**.

4403 Bus Shelter Repairs

A replacement is needed at Withyham, which EMRs can be used for (in 2018/19 F&A agreed Ear marked Reserves should be considered for a renewals programme). **recommend budget £200 for minor repairs and utilise EMR for new.**

4405 Telephone boxes (adopted)

WPC has adopted 3 red 'phone boxes – at The Victoria, The Ridge and Balls Green. These may occasionally need some maintenance **recommend budget £200**

4406 Defibrillators

WPC has responsibilities for defibrillators at Groombridge Village Hall, Kings' Hall and Blackham village hall. Requires occasional maintenance re new pads, batteries etc. **Recommend budget £200**

4407 Parish Maintenance equipment & mileage

The PMP resigned in June 2021 and Staff Committee has agreed to utilise the skills of a contractor for maintenance of parish assets instead of employing someone (to be reviewed in 2022/23). **Based on this recommend nominal amount £200**

4410 Noticeboards

The Cooks Corner noticeboard has been repaired by Cllr Tarling and awaits re-siting, likely to Blackham Village Hall. **Recommend budget £200**

4415 Right of Way

The ToR includes a budget of **£500**.

4420 finger posts and signs

It has been noted that the fingerposts need some maintenance work as it has been a few years since this was last done. **Recommend budget £1,500**.

4421 Road Safety Committee

The ToR includes a budget of **£500**. In 2021/22 this has been utilised for the mileage undertaken by the Highways Coordinator. There is also an EMR line

4426 GB village sign

Full maintenance was undertaken in 2021/22 but annual maintenance is needed - **recommend £300**.

4428 Grit bins

Replacement grit bin needed Eridge Road/Roffeys due to damage. **Recommend £350**

4429 Salt spreaders/Salt

ESCC refills c£108 per bin. **Recommend £500**

4450 Energy and maintenance street lights (39)

We have 39 columns and are undertaking LED replacements and have requested stock to be moved to part-night lighting where it can, which should reduce costs in future years, based on our last bill **Recommend £2000**

4451 Repairs and renewals Street lights

F&A will receive notification of new design requirements from ESCC which will need to be taken into consideration whenever renewals are required **Recommend retain £2000**.

4452 New columns

F&A will receive notification of new design requirements from ESCC which will need to be taken into consideration whenever new columns are required ***Recommend retain £3000.***

4500 office associated repairs

The external paintwork needs to be completed and windows repaired where wood is rotting. Kitchen ceiling and roof repairs and redecoration also needed. ***Recommend budget £2,000.*** There is also an EMR budget for parish office repairs.

4501 electrical/office equipment

Recommend retain a small budget for any renewals. ***Recommend £200***

4502 Office utilities

Includes gas, electricity, water ***Recommend budget £2,000***

4503 Office Maintenance Contracts and audits

Includes boiler servicing contract, alarm servicing contract, annual fire extinguisher checks, PAT testing of electrical items, window cleaning, plumbing costs, annual H&S inspections ie fire safety, PAT, legionella etc. ***Recommend budget £1000.***

4504 Parish Office Business Rates

Have been exempt for past 4 years, recommended budgeting ***£0.***

4506 Office waste

We have a contract with Biffa for the Old Station bins, based on 2021/22 expenditure ***recommend budget £800.***

4510 Meeting Room catering

This includes the drinks sachets that are used in the Flavia machine, milk etc. Obviously, the more bookings or people (staff and others) using the premises, the more is used.

Recommend budgeting £150

4600 Bank charges

This is normally around £100. recommend ***budget £100.***

5001 Post Office CIC Subsidy Grant

Based on cashflows the CIC is seeking a subsidy of £13,000 for 2022/23 (this was £15,505 in 2021/22). ***Recommend budget £13,000***

The Clerk would ask Councillors to note that this is based on limited data as the post office/shop has only been trading since 28 October 2021. Should elements of the project need additional support, eg should the volunteer workforce for the retail side not work as hoped, then the CIC would need to return to WPC.

5100 Post Office Building annual PWLB repayments

This is the amount WPC repays to PWLB for the loan to purchase the post office/Phoenix House building. ***Budget £17,000***

5101 Post Office Building annual non-loan costs

This might be for items of maintenance etc at the post office/Phoenix House building. ***Budget £1,000.***

5200 Post Office Building Purchase & Conversion

This, together with EMRs (£67,715 in total) would be to cover the refurbishment of Phoenix House before its re-rental. ***Budget £15,000***

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS to Council

Taking all the above into account results in budgeted expenditure of £299,593 and expected income of £136,340. This leaves a gap of £163,253 to find from Precept.

In 2021/22 the Precept was £156,053. The difference between £156,053 and £163,253 is £7,200 which represents a 4.6% increase (*the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/23 proposes no extension of council tax referendum principles to local councils so we are not limited in the % increase*).

The 2021/22 the band D requirement was £117.59. The provisional tax base for 2022/23 is 1,333.2 meaning that a precept of £163,253 would be £122.45, an increase of £4.086 (9p per week).

One of the largest expenditures in 2022/23 will be the refurbishment of Phoenix House before its re-rental and to minimise further increase to annual budget/Precept F&A recommends the following re-allocation of Earmarked Reserves to provide funds towards these works:

Budget Line	Budget Description	2021/22 Budget at Dec21	2022/23 Proposed budget	Notes
326	Balls Green Play area	5835	5000	Looking to provide further equipment
327	Gb Play area	28350.5	1440.49	& use CiL
328 NEW	Teasley Mead play equipment	0	2500	Swings requested by residents
329	Road safety projects	15000	3000	Looking to provide a further VAS site at A264
330	Work in progress	5470.58	0	No carry forward figures
332	WPV	2000	2000	Unspent WDC grant
333	Office associated repairs	5000.4	2000	Also budget 4500 £2,000
336	CiL	26910.01	26910.01	use for Groombridge playground with EMR 327 (fundraiser)
337	Parish Assets	5000	3000	Replacement bus shelter Withyham
338	Environmental Improvements	10000	5000	TBA
339	post Office convert **Rename Phoenix House works	0	52715.5	Also £15,000 in budget = £67,715.50
		103566.49	103566	

Projected end of year 2021/22 position based on cashflow £171,567.89 split across reserves as follows:

Suggested Earmarked reserves 2022/23

£103,566*

General Reserves would be

£ 68,001.89**

***Ear marked reserves** are not meant for use for ongoing expenditure, as this would be unsustainable and at some point the reserves would be exhausted. **They should be used for larger scale renewals such as vehicles, property maintenance in order that it is possible to plan and finance a known programme without the need to wildly vary budgets each year. EMR can be used for known/predicted liabilities.** It is good practice for an agreement to be made by Council for the allocation of EMR and then any variance should be approved through Council.

****General reserves** have no restrictions on use, they can smooth the impact of uneven cashflows, offset budget requirements if necessary, or be used in case of unexpected events or emergencies. **It is suggested by the auditor that they should be around third to half of Precept (c£54-£81K in the case of a Precept of around £163,000).**