

FINANCE COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 2025

BUDGET SETTING

The Financial Regulations state, with relation to Budget and precept:

- Before setting a precept, the council must calculate its council tax requirement for each financial year by preparing and approving a budget, in accordance with The Local Government Finance Act 1992 or succeeding legislation.
- Budgets for salaries and wages, including employer contributions shall be reviewed by Staff Committee at least annually in November for the following financial year and the final version shall be evidenced by a hard copy schedule signed by the Clerk and the Chair of the Staff committee.
- No later than December each year, the RFO shall prepare a draft budget with detailed estimates of all income and expenditure for the following financial year along with a forecast for the remaining years of the existing Parish Plan, taking account of the lifespan of assets and cost implications of repair or replacement.
- Unspent budgets for completed projects shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year. Unspent funds for partially completed projects may only be carried forward by placing them in an earmarked reserve with the formal approval of the full council.
- Each committee shall review its draft budget and submit any proposed amendments to finance committee not later than the end of November each year.
- The draft budget with any committee proposals and forecast, including any recommendations for the use or accumulation of reserves, shall be considered by the finance committee and a recommendation made to the council.
- Having considered the proposed budget and forecast, the council shall determine its council tax requirement by setting a budget. The council shall set a precept for this amount no later than the end of January for the ensuing financial year.
- Any member with council tax unpaid for more than two months is prohibited from voting on the budget or precept by Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and must and must disclose at the start of the meeting that Section 106 applies to them.
- The RFO shall issue the precept to the billing authority no later than the end of February and supply each member with a copy of the agreed annual budget.
- The agreed budget provides a basis for monitoring progress during the year by comparing actual spending and income against what was planned.

11.1 Note Timetable

To meet the requirements of the Financial Regulations above:

- A Staff Committee meeting is to be scheduled in November to review budgets for salaries and wages, including employer contributions
- All Committees to be asked to review their draft budget and submit any proposed amendments to the RFO by November

- RFO to draft the draft budget in consultation with the Clerk, to present to Finance Committee on 24th November
- 2026/27 Budget and Precept recommendation to go to December or January Council
- RFO to issue the precept to Wealden District Council by end of February

11.2 Approach to Members' Allowances for 2026/27 budget

At its January 2025 meeting Council considered the Independent Remuneration Panel Report on Members Allowances 2025/26 and agreed to continue a freeze on allowances 2020/21 levels rather than a 3% increase

They also felt that WPC should consider raising the allowance to recommended levels in 2026 as printing and paper costs have increased and they wouldn't want prospective councillors to be put off by the costs associated with undertaking the role.

They agreed that Finance Committee should consider including Members Allowances at updated levels, travel and subsistence rates and costs for child/dependants' care in their 2026/27 budget setting.

By way of comparison the current Members Allowances (paid to Elected councillors only) are £167 Basic and £288 Chairman's Allowance, frozen at 2020/21 financial year. The recommendation in the 2025 IRP report was £196 Basic and £336 Chair.

Finance Committee to consider whether the RFO should include in the 2026/27 budget for an increase in Members allowances based on the 2025 recommended level +3%

In terms of travel and subsistence rates and costs for child/dependants' care, relevant parts of the 2025 IRP report are:

That the policy to fix Travelling Allowances in line with HM Revenue & Customs 'Approved Mileage Allowance Payment' (AMAP) rates be re-affirmed;

Subsistence Allowance to be the same as those indicated for District Councillors. These allowances for 2025/26 are set out in the table below.

Breakfast	£8.00	When away from home on approved Council business before 8 a.m.
Lunch	£11.00	When away from home on approved Council business between 12 noon and 2 p.m.
Evening Meal	£20.00	When away from home on approved Council business after 7 p.m.
Overnight absence	£98.30	When outside London
London and specified Conferences	£110	

All claims must be accompanied by a valid receipt and payment is subject to Councillors signing to say they have actually and necessarily incurred the amount being claimed.

That ... Town and Parish Councils can choose the extent to which they wish to implement these allowances; and

The Panel notes with regret that it is still not possible under the current legislation to recommend a Carers' Allowance for Parish/ Town Councillors, but would wish for all Parish and Town Councils to consider adopting a basic allowance to enable Parish/Town Councillors to use this to cover care costs where need be to attend meetings.

Should Finance Committee wish to budget for Councillor's claiming travel and subsistence rates and costs for child/dependants' care this would need to be a separate budget line as it would not be put through payroll, and would instead be paid as expenses.

Finance Committee to consider whether the RFO should include in the 2026/27 budget some funds for travel/subsistence and costs for child/dependants' care when attending meetings and if so, an indication of what amount to include.

11.3 Provide any additional guidance to the RFO

The RFO will be drafting the 2026/27 budget to present to November Finance Committee, for recommendation to December or January Council.

The RFO will incorporate any recommendations from Committees and the Clerk, and the Parish Plan which will be reviewed at October Council.

Finance Committee is asked if it has any guidance for the RFO on expenditure/ budget levels to feed into the draft budget.