

Financial Budget for 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Strategy and Explanations from Finance and General Purposes Committee

The attached proposed draft budget has been considered carefully at two long meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. In asking for approval of the budget from the full Council, we recognise that the figures themselves can be difficult to interpret, particularly given the complicating influences of local authority rules as well as general accounting principles.

Strategy

The Finance and General Purposes Committee feel the time is right to attempt to develop more community projects for the residents of Mortimer. Some projects now or in the future may be funded by West Berkshire (increasingly unlikely) or by receiving full or partial grants from other organisations. However, as a Parish Council with a relatively low precept (the element of Council Tax which specifically goes to the Parish) compared to other equivalent large villages we do consider the strategy to increase Parish Precept Tax the correct strategy to follow. The proposed increase to the Parish Precept Tax amounts to £12.49 for the year 2017 - 2018 on a Band D property.

There are two main ways we propose to use the increased income to invest in the village.

There are limitations on what grants a Parish Council may make particularly in connection with services like libraries but Section 137 grants (to be explained further at the meeting) enable us to make contributions to projects such as maintaining the library. Our council has not used this power for some years.

The larger part of what is included in the budget is in connection with the development of some community projects which have grown out of work on the NDP... First, work has already started in conjunction with GWR to consider more fully than previously the provision of additional car parking at the station in a way that could overcome previous objections. Further projects, such as creating a Heritage Trail around the village, the extension of sporting facilities for the village and a restored footpath/cycleway between Mortimer and Burghfield, are being discussed in detail.

So our strategy is to fund carefully expenditure to maintain and improve the life of our village. The funding proposed is partly by way of a loan from the Treasury funded Public Works Loan Board and partly by a higher precept.

The Financial Entries

We are not yet certain of the exact timescale for the projects being examined and have allowed for taking out a PWLB loan which would be repaid on an interest and capital basis over 10 years.

A big problem with Parish Council budgets is the difficulty of legally spending on anything which is not in the budget.

The loan will, however, not be taken out unless the projects are feasible and are ready for potential investment to proceed and other sources of grant funding are not available.

Expenditure under the Section 137 rules enables the Parish to act more promptly, where it meets the necessary criteria.

Further explanations can be provided at the meeting.