



Precept Letter

Dear Resident,

Setting both the budget and precept is probably the most important decision taken by a town or parish council. The precept set by a town council is small compared to the level of Council Tax set by Milton Keynes Council (MKC) or the charge levied by the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley. It is nevertheless important that you hear about the precept and the thinking behind the figure that has been set. For the year 2022/23, the precept will need to increase, due to several factors:

- Inflation (at the time of setting the precept, forecast to be over 5% but more recently, the February report by the [Bank of England](#), it is forecast to be 7.25 % in April 2022)
- salary costs; at the time of writing, the national salary increase is still not known and we have had to factor this in. Also, it has become increasingly apparent that for the number of services and activities, the Council is under-resourced, we are addressing this by creating the new post of Council Support Officer.
- Neighbourhood Plan (NHP); we are progressing the items from action plan e.g. a plan to spend the S.106 monies (c£60,000) held by MKC. This will need considerable staff resources to move forward. We are also reviewing and updating the NHP Action Plan.
- De-carbonisation: we are setting up a Climate Action Working Group and working towards becoming carbon neutral which will need an additional staff resource.
- Additional Activities 'you said, we listened' e.g. activities for youth and older residents and Citizen's Advice outreach. We will also be undertaking a new survey to understand YOUR priorities so we can plan for 2023 and beyond.
- The necessity to start a maintenance fund for 5-7 Church Street. Initially this fund will pay for a Building Inspection and five-year maintenance plan.

We have had to **raise** the precept from **£219,869** to **£232,058** (an increase of £12,189, just over 5%). MKC has set the Stony Stratford Council Tax Base (the number of homes the precept is spread between) at 2553.29. The precept increase equates to an increase of £3.38 (3.86%) **per year** on a Band D property taking it from £87.51 to £90.89. The figure of £90.89 equates to £1.74 per Band D property **per week**.

When setting the budget and precept, the Council considered the additional financial burdens being placed on residents from the Global Pandemic, wholesale fuel prices and increased food bills. The increase to the Precept was kept to a minimum by;

- careful re-negotiation of contracts e.g. Computer software and licenses
- reduction in discretionary budgets such as Floral Features and the Newsletter (aiming to save up to £2,500 during the year).
- No increase to the Elected Members Allowance in 2022/23
- Use of both Earmarked and General Reserves

The figures for our forecast income and expenditure are set out below.

**Budget
Income**

Code	Details	£ Amount
1000	Precept	232058
1005	LCTS Grant	7069
1010	Bank Interest Received	36
1011	Dividend Received	0
1015	Floral Features	0
1025	Landscaping Grant	56903
1030	Grants & Donations Received	0
1040	Farmers Market Income	1275
1045	Allotment Rents - Wolverton Rd	3152
1046	Allotment Rents - London Rd	700
1047	Allotment Rents - Boundary Cre	946
1050	Newsletter Sales	0
1060	Sponsorship - Stony in Bloom	300
1066	Big Lunch Income	0
1067	Apple Day Income	300
1080	5-7 Church St Income	9500
1090	Miscellaneous Receipts	0
	Total Income	312239

**Budget
Expenditure**

Nominal Code	Item	£ Amount
4000	Salaries	88400
4001	Employers NI etc	23641
4002	PAYE Admin	464
4005	Officer Travel and Subsistence	339
4006	Human Resources	556
4015	Copy Licence	350
4020	Telephones	1375
4021	Internet Service	0
4025	Room Hire	263
4030	Insurance	834
4035	Domain Licence	80
4040	Internal audit	295
4041	External Audit	1000
4045	Training	1500
4046	Conferences – Council Run	106
4047	Conferences – External	662
4050	Publicity	0
4055	Office Equipment	1000
4065	Finance Software	400
4067	Computer software & licenses	2184
4070	Stationery & Postage	200
4080	Bank Charges	0
4100	Memberships	1681
4150	Newsletter/Publishing	7669

4152	Website	120
4160	Elected Members Allowances	5310
4170	Civic Budget	30
4200	Toilets Maintenance	18400
4210	Toilets Reserves	0
4250	Dog bins	6690
4251	Litter Bins	772
4253	Landscape Contract	55246
4255	Litter Picking	2181
4260	Farmers Market	500
4266	Crafting for Change	1769
4300	Annual Community Award	103
4350	5-7 Church St	35000
4351	5-7 Church Street Improvements	5000
4352	5-7 Church St PWLB loan repayments	8922
4400	Youth Activities	5000
4401	Junior Youth Club YH	7075
4402	Senior Youth Club	4578
4406	Big Lunch	1500
4414	NHP Initiatives	500
4415	Floral Features	6000
4416	SIB – Sponsorship Costs	0
4419	Apple Day	1500
4420	Allotments – Wolverton Rd	1561
4422	Allotments – Boundary Crescent	1248
4425	Capital Borrowing – BC Allots	2708
4428	Play Sessions	6427
4450	Grants	7100
4452	Covid-19 Fund	
4460	Civic Initiatives	12437
	Overhead Expenditure	330676
	Total Budget Income	312239
	Expenditure	330676
	Net Income over Expenditure (from use of Reserves) to maintain a balanced budget	-18437

The budget for the year and the level of precept for 2022/23 were agreed at the **Special meeting of Full Council held on 12th January 2022**. The papers for the meeting can be found [here](#)

When I wrote to you this time last year about the precept and budget for 2021/22, none of could have predicted that coronavirus would continue to impact on our lives. During 2021, most of the Council’s activities have been affected by coronavirus to some extent, with staff largely working from home and the activities funded by the Council such as the Big Lunch and Apple Day cancelled. However, the Council has adapted, continued with the majority of services and carried out the following additional functions such as;

- helped residents by administering the database of Covid-19 volunteers and delivering medicine/food where necessary
- worked with MKC on several large projects to assess need and distribute grants such as the Covid-19 grant to businesses, Welcome Back Fund (for ‘beautification works’) and Economic Recovery Grant. Totalling more than £40,000.

We have also concentrated on the Council's main priority of the refurbishment of 5-7 Church Street. Hopefully you will have seen the regular updates on the Stony Stratford website. Click [here](#) for the February update.

Another important part of the Council's funds is allocated to the provision of grants to local organisations. During 2021/22, the Council awarded grants to

Grants (AC Code 4450)		Budget: £7,100
<i>Organisation</i>		2021/22
<i>Fullers Slade Residents Assoc 'Lark in the Park' community Event</i>		£550.00
<i>Galley Hill Residents Assoc.: Easter gifts for children (in lieu of usual Easter Egg Hunt)</i>		£250.00
<i>Lantern Festival</i>		£220.00
<i>MK (Stony Stratford) Lions: PA and Brass Band for Remembrance Sunday</i>		£280.00
<i>Mr Simpsons Little Consort free concert and workshop for all ages</i>		£350.00
<i>Riverside Parks Group: 2021 Riverside Fair</i>		£450.00
<i>Stony Stratford Business Association (Lights)</i>		£495.00
<i>Stonylive! – First Aid for the event</i>		£180.00
<i>York House Centre - Crafting for change (temp location) community sessions</i>		£480.00
<i>York House Centre - Act Out/Act up Drama group</i>		£300.00
		£3,555.00
Budget Remaining		£3,545.00

If you are an organisation in need of a grant, please do not hesitate to contact us as soon as possible. The grant application form and criteria can be found [here](#)

I am grateful to my fellow councillors for taking their responsibilities seriously over the last difficult year. We are very pleased to be meeting in person again. I am also grateful to the five staff of the Council: Lynne Compton (Town Clerk), Karen Hiser (Deputy Town Clerk), Melanie Hyde (Information Officer), Ummara Qureshi (Environment and Planning Officer) and Alan Box (Caretaker) for their work to help ensure that the Council achieves its aims.

We were very sorry to lose both Karen Hiser (Deputy Town Clerk), and Ummara Qureshi (Environment and Planning Officer) who both had to relocate to different parts of the country. We wish them well for the future. We extend a warm welcome to Amanda Jones, the new Deputy Town Clerk.

If you have any questions about the work of the Council, please do not hesitate to contact me through my e-mail address: keith.tilley@stonystratford.gov.uk

Best wishes

Keith Tilley, Chair
Stony Stratford Town Council