Agenda Item 9 – Budget 2026-27

The Clerk, as the Responsible Financial Officer, has started planning the budget for the next financial year 2026-27.

Some points to note:

- Costs relating to contracts will be increased as per the agreements. New contracts to replace those in their last year are currently being advertised, as agreed by Council in July 2025, and will be brought to November Council for quotes to be considered.
- Weed spraying will be considered at the November meeting to include the responses to the short consultation agreed at the September meeting.
- Other regular costs will be increased by an indicative amount, based on inflation or the previous year's increase/spend, or decreased if spend is falling regularly below the budgeted amount.
- The Clerk is speaking to contractors, where required, to obtain an indicative rate/increase for the next financial year.
- Allotment fees to rise by 5% from October 2026. This is in line with previously agreed annual increases.
- The Clerk has reviewed Cemetery fees, which are still in line with the fees being charged by other local parishes.
- Tree inspections and tree work are being built into the budget on an ongoing basis, where not already allowed for.
- Internal and External Audit costs will be the same as this year.
- The annual national pay increase for this financial year was 3.2%. Next year's increase will be based on this year's.
- Staffing costs will be adjusted if required for the Litter Picker depending on the hours agreed for the role going forward, as per item 12 on this meeting agenda.

Some things for Councillors to start thinking about at this stage:

- Insurance – over the Summer the Clerk carried out some investigations to see how much it would cost to fully insure all the Council's assets rather than partly self-insure given the increase in value of play and recreation equipment due to the purchase of additional items and refurbishments in the past two years. Insurance costs to fully insure would be circa £2,500 per annum. This compares to £1,036 in 2025 under current arrangements. Councillors will need to decide whether they wish to increase the Precept to cover the full cost.
- Sufficiency of earmarked reserves for play areas – do any need additional reserves? i.e. no longer any reserves held for Chestnut Drive – this will need building up.
- Potential impact of Local Government Reorganisation. Do we have sufficient funds in reserves to meet any potential costs, i.e. legal costs, asset transfer?
- 2027 Parish Council elections. Although elections have generally been uncontested for Willand and costs are therefore low, a contested election increases costs significantly. The Clerk recommends that funds are allocated and built up for this purpose in a reserve.

If there is an underspend in 2025-26 this can be used to fund some of these areas. The Council can also look at allocating funds through the Capital Budget or other relevant budget lines as appropriate or add new budget lines to address some or all of the above.

The budget will be finalised for full consideration and agreement at the special budget meeting to be held on the 18th December, with the Precept being set at the 8th January meeting.

Debbie Bird
Clerk to Willand parish Council
October 2025