

Ash Parish Council Precept 2023-2024

This year you probably won't study the itemisation of your annual Council Tax Bill, just simply scan to the bottom and look at just how much it has gone up by! The amount is likely to be significant, as the government has allowed local councils to put up their council tax by up to 5% without a referendum. Due to the soaring rates of inflation, many are doing just that.

Other items on the bill will be amounts for the Police, the Fire Authority, and the precept for the Parish. This is the amount that is given to Ash Parish to pay for maintenance and improvement of local services, which is administered by Ash Parish Council. All of these are likely to have gone up - except the amount which goes to Ash Parish Council!

We are all pretty tired of hearing about the cost of living crisis. When not droning on about errant members of the Royal Family, it seems the only thing that the media are interested in. But we can't avoid the fact that Inflation is currently running at over 10% and a simple visit to the supermarket will let anyone know that prices are rocketing. The result is that many parish councils are using the current situation as an excuse to put up their precept - some by 20% or even 30%.

Ash Parish Council have been discussing our budget for some time, but decided at their January meeting that for the second year running we would freeze our precept request, so by the end of next financial year, the amount charged for the Parish Precept will have remained the same for three years. Even though the actual amount of any potential rise might not have been significant for some, these three years will have been the toughest years financially that many of us will face, and so the Parish Council thought that it is an important point of principle when so many of our parishioners are struggling to make ends meet.

We are able to do this because of the financial responsibility of Ash Parish Council over a number of years, which has gradually put money aside for Parish projects and also because in the last year we have been very active in applying for a number of grants to subsidise these projects. The result is that we will still be able to make some significant improvements to the Parish, including the installation of bus shelters, improvements to the play area and the two car parks in the village and this year we will also finally have the cemetery extension consecrated - all without asking you for more money. Without these grants we would have had to raise the precept by over 16% to meet the same spending commitments.

We will also continue to maintain the parish, which includes keeping the green spaces, recreation ground, pavilion, car parks, cemetery and graveyard in good order.

Although a real terms a small gesture, Ash Parish Council hope that freezing the Parish precept will help your household finances slightly, and that it shows that we understand the issues our parishioners are facing.

Steve Davey.

Chair, Ash Parish Council.