



## 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 2021/22, I am pleased to report that, despite MKC reducing the Council Tax Base (the number of homes the precept is spread between), the Town Council has agreed not to raise the precept, recognising that the financial circumstances of many parishioners are precarious and that our level of reserves means that we can cover any additional expenditure next year without an increase.

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

Code	Details	Amount
1000	Precept	£219,869.00
1005	LCTS Grant	£7,069.00
1010	Bank Interest Received	£100.00
1011	Dividend Received	£0.00
1015	Floral Features	£385.00
1025	Landscaping Grant	£55,246.00
1030	Grants & Donations Received	£0.00
1040	Farmers Market Income	£1,275.00
1045	Allotment Rents - Wolverton Rd	£3,060.00
1046	Allotment Rents - London Rd	£714.00
1047	Allotment Rents - Boundary Cre	£918.00
1050	Newsletter Sales	£0.00
1060	Sponsorship - Stony in Bloom	£300.00
1066	Big Lunch Income	£0.00
1067	Apple Day Income	£300.00
1069	Town Fayre	£0.00
1080	5-7 Church St Income	£3,500.00
1090	Miscellaneous Receipts: PWLB Loan if drawn down for project	£150,000.00
<b>Total expected Income</b>		<b>£442,736.00</b>

Code	Details	Amount
4000	Salaries	£70,115.00
4001	Employers NI and Pens etc	£23,814.00
4002	PAYE Admin	£450.00
4005	Officer Travel and Subsistence	£332.00
4015	Copy Licence	£510.00

4020	Telephones	£506.00
4021	Internet Service	£477.00
4025	Room Hire	£255.00
4030	Insurance	£810.00
4033	Elections Costs (n/a as included in MKC election 2021)	£0.00
4035	Domain Licence	£78.00
4040	Internal audit	£295.00
4041	External Audit	£816.00
4045	Training	£1,500.00
4046	Conferences - Council Run	£103.00
4047	Conferences - External	£643.00
4050	Publicity	£500.00
4055	Office Equipment	£0.00
4065	Finance Software	£388.00
4067	Computer software & licenses	£3,060.00
4070	Stationery & Postage	£357.00
4080	Bank Charges	£0.00
4100	Memberships	£1,632.00
4150	Newsletter/Publishing	£7,446.00
4152	Website	£122.00
4160	Elected Members Allowances	£5,841.00
4170	Civic Budget	£30.00
4200	Toilets Maintenance	£18,400.00
4210	Toilets Reserves	£0.00
4250	Dog bins	£6,495.00
4251	Litter Bins	£714.00
4253	Landscape Contract	£55,246.00
4255	Litter Picking	£1,632.00
4260	Farmers Market	£800.00
4266	Crafting for Change	£0.00
4300	Annual Community Award	£100.00
4350	5-7 Church St	£46,000.00
4351	5-7 Church Street Improvements (if project goes ahead and PWLB loan drawn down)	£150,000.00
4401	Junior Youth Club YH	£6,936.00
4402	Senior Youth Club	£4,488.00
4406	Big Lunch	£0.00
4414	NHP Initiatives	£0.00
4415	Floral Features	£7,000.00
4416	SIB - Sponsorship Costs	£31.00
4419	Apple Day	£1,500.00
4420	Allotments - Wolverton Rd	£1,530.00
4422	Allotments - Boundary Crescent	£1,224.00
4425	Capital Borrowing - BC Allots	£2,708.00
4428	Play Sessions	£6,427.00
4430	Mortimer Park	£0.00
4432	Wolverton Rec Play Park Proj	£0.00
4450	Grants	£7,100.00

4460	Civic Initiatives	£4,250.00
4461	Town Fayre	£0.00
4550	Public Art Project - Hayes Mew	£0.00
<b>Total expected Expenditure</b>		<b>£442,661.00</b>

Difference: Addition to General Reserve                      £75.00

The budget for the year and the level of precept for 2021/22 were agreed at the council meeting held on January 19. The papers for the meeting can be found at

[Agenda and Papers Full Council v2 signed FC0121.pdf \(stonystratford.gov.uk\)](#)

When I wrote to you this time last year about the precept and budget for 2020/21, none of could have predicted what was about to occur. During the year, all of the Council’s activities have been affected by coronavirus, with staff largely working from home, our offices at 5-7 Church Street being closed and the activities funded by the Council such as the Big Lunch and Apple Day curtailed or cancelled. All of this has meant that our expenditure during the year has been reduced, our reserves slightly increased and the need to raise additional funding via the precept removed.

During the current year, we had hoped to begin work on the improvements to 5-7 Church Street which is owned by the Town Council and houses the library service provided by Milton Keynes Council. A specification for the project focussing on the creation of a new porch and entrance, the removal of the central staircase and its reinstatement to the side and the creation of new library space for both children and adults has been drawn up and put out to tender. Unfortunately, on both occasions, the tenders received were higher than the budget that we had agreed for the project. At its meeting in January, the Council agreed unanimously to go to tender for a third time with a specified budget figure published. In the event of an appropriate tender being received, it is likely that work will commence in late April with a view to completion in the autumn. The project is being undertaken jointly with Milton Keynes Library Service which has agreed to allocate funds towards the refurbishment.

Next year will also see a new contractor undertaking the landscape work of the Council which I funded through a grant from MKC. The Council published a revised specification for the landscape contract which runs from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2023. The current provider was not successful in retaining the contract and a new provider will take over on 1 April. Comments on their work – both favourable and critical – can be submitted to the Town Council via the e-mail address: [landscape@stonystratford.gov.uk](mailto:landscape@stonystratford.gov.uk)

During the current year, the Council has also replaced and upgraded the public toilets provided on Silver Street and managed by Healthmatic. The Council confirmed that the provision of public conveniences was important, especially for key workers during the initial lockdown when alternative provision through cafes or restaurants was not available. The new facility was opened in December 2020.

Another important part of the Council’s funds is allocated to the provision of grants to local organisations. During 2020/21, the Council awarded grants to the residents’ association of Fullers Slade and Galley Hill to provide much needed assistance to communities in need. The Council also made grants to StonyRadio to help the station establish itself as a key part of the local community’s information network, MKYMCA to furnish a room AgeUK for emergency support services and Stony Stratford Town Football Club to repair their container roof.

Elections to the Council were due to be held in May 2020 but these were postponed. These are now due to be held in May 2021. I would urge anyone interested in being a candidate to contact the Clerk, Lynne Compton, to have a chat about the role. Town councils are the first tier of local government and act as a voice for the communities that they represent. They do not tend to be dominated by party politics. Rather, they function by consensus, bringing communities together to solve a problem and to improve the lives of residents.

I am grateful to my fellow councillors for taking their responsibilities seriously over the last difficult year. Meetings held remotely are not the most satisfying. However, I think that we have managed to discuss matters on the agenda and take appropriate decisions rationally and constructively. 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 ensure that the Council achieves its aims. Working remotely has not been easy and I hope they have survived the challenges!

If you have any questions about the work of the Council, please do not hesitate to contact me through my e-mail address: [rob.gifford@stonystratford.gov.uk](mailto:rob.gifford@stonystratford.gov.uk)

Best wishes

Robert Gifford  
Chair  
Stony Stratford Town Council