

As of yesterday, MPC had £167,448.50 in the Nat West, plus the £19,962.21 in the N&I, and there is £40,652.03 left of this year's £86,933 budget.

As we're exactly six months through the year that puts MPC a little over the average spending, which would be roughly £43,475 but we have just made the one-off payments of £5,455 + VAT for the Play Area equipment repairs, and £2,000 for the Flittabus grant, and we had the cost of removing the old streetlight column in The Knoll, so there is nothing to worry about.

Regarding the Annual Governance & Annual Return report, MPC have received the Completion Letter from the external auditors, along with the audited AGAR for 2024-2025. The Completion Notice is on the website and noticeboards.

MPC passed the audit with no cause for concern, the only matters highlighted were, as explained last month, there were corrections made after a box was accidentally left blank and a prior year figure misspecified, as well as the date for public rights accidentally being 28 days instead of 30 days so will have to tick No to assertion 4 for the coming year.

It's now the time of year to be looking at the draft budget for the next financial year, which I have sent round for everyone to have a look at. This is the first rough draft taking into account the £4,000 Cllr Aston has said will be needed for stating the renewal of the neighbourhood plan, and the extra need to cover the cost of the next arboricultural survey, which needs to be carried out every two years.

Details to note are that there is a £1,000 increase in clerk's salary to allow for the annual pay rise, but the pension costs should be less than half because I reach pensionable age next summer so can start claiming my pension instead of paying into it – there may also be a change in national insurance payments for the same reason but I'm not sure so have left that at the same level for now.

Streetlight energy costs seem to have stabilised so that's allowed a cut in the budget there and I've decreased the amount towards the pavilion project, for now at least. Events has gone up to cover the summer play sessions, and Grants also increased to £3,000 from £2,000 because that's the level that appears to be required.

All in all, with minor tweaks, this suggests a 3% increase in the precept to £89,560 which, taken on the current tax base of 1,466 would give a Band D council tax charge of £61.90 against this year's £59.30.

I don't expect everyone to have examined the draft budget in detail yet as I only sent it round yesterday but do look so you're ready to discuss it more fully at the November meeting please.

Tracey Bearton

Clerk/RFO & Proper Officer to Maulden Parish Council