

Re: Budget and Precept 2024/25

From: **Dave White** | dave@stalbanspc.org

January 11,

6:34 PM

To: **Cllr Francesco Lari** | francesco@stalbanspc.org, **Cllr John Todd** | john@stalbanspc.org, **Cllr Prairie Bryant** | prairie@stalbanspc.org, **clerk@stalbanspc.org**

Cc: [REDACTED]

Hi Claire,

Many thanks for your work around the budget and precept forecast for 2024/25 financial year. I have attached both reports again for ease of reference, Budget 2025.

In terms of the St. Albans Parish Council 1st draft document, it may be helpful to review the Grants and Donation section of this report. Here we have code 7, Community activities and at code 8, Grants and Donations.

The figures in both codes refer to s.137 financial assistance provided by the Parish Council 2023//24. These figures should be recorded as code 8 and community activities should be reserved to those funds directly relating to activities provided by the St. Albans Parish Council and Councillors.

The overall figure of **£6348.00** is correct. The breakdown is as follows:

- £1500.00 - Emmanuel Church,
- £1648.00 – StARS,
- £2900.00 - Warren Action Group,
- £ 300.00 - NG United FC.

I have also read the draft 'Budget and Grant Allocation', proposal which assists in setting a long-term strategy going forward for the St. Albans Parish Council delivery and spending. It is my view that grant allocation should be a small part of the Parish Councils delivery. Section 137 is set in statute and refers to the allocation of a 'small' amount of money to set a side for local groups etc. This part of the Clerk's recommendations in respect to grant applications has been completed. This has set out the Parish Councils position on s.137 which still provides a generous contribution to our local community groups.

Since the formation of the St. Albans Parish Council a vast amount of the precept has been allocated to S.137 provisions, with little or no commitment from the Parish Council in adopting any long-term strategy in delivering a wider service to our community. This hasn't been without attempts by a small number of Councillors. There are many recent examples of projects taking 2/3 years to deliver. These projects in reality should have been delivered in a matter of months.

The second paragraph of the Clerk's draft statement captures the concerns many of our residents have. Developing a meaningful strategy, including the allocation of funding going forward, is intrinsic to the future of this Parish Council.

*'The current approach to spend and grant allocation by St Albans Parish Council is not sustainable. Monies are often allocated on short term decisions and are not always needs led. It doesn't include long term planning and has no evidenced impact on improving community wellbeing or providing better services. The approach relinquishes the Parish Council from their responsibilities of delivering services to meet local needs with an over reliance on small, consistent number of local Providers. The current approach promotes a view that the Parish Council is a body that should redistribute monies to any local Providers that apply for it despite there being no clear steer in what is required. In turn, this has created unnecessary tension and ill feeling across Councillors, Providers and residents especially in instances where additional information has been requested or applications have been denied' [p.1 Clerk - **Budget and Grant Allocation – Proposal**]*

In respect to the current budget the following projects are still outstanding and will need to be delivered by the end of the financial year:

- Purchase of the Parish laptop and accessories including IT support,
- Christmas lights purchase and installation,
- Park Benches and Noticeboard,
- Replacement bench (Bestwood Lodge Drive o/s from 22/23).

Going forward into 2024/25 financial year we may wish to consider budgeting for the 80th Anniversary of the Normandy Landings. Material and background have previously been circulated to the Councillors. Proposals could be as big or small given an array of possibilities. There has been talk of lighting beacons across the Country, special suppers etc. Locally we could budget and adopt one of these themes.

The Parish planters require onward maintenance and planting. This would need to include a watering contract as the planters will require increased watering during the warmer summer months. The current planting scheme has covered the most recent months. From May – June a summer display will need to be sourced and planted. The maintenance and repair of these planters may also need to be factored in.

Consideration for any Christmas event would need to be discussed, drafted and delivered. Again, in most recent years the Parish Council have sourced a sleigh, trailer and vehicle to travel the boundaries of our Parish. It may be that we provide a Parish lighting display in various locations of the Parish.

Finance and develop the heritage link to the St. Albans Parish area. The concept can be seen in the work exhibited in the Dynamo Café, with support of the Friends of Bestwood Country Park. Wildlife groups could be established which brings a range of benefits to the area, neighbourhood and individuals within our community.

Improving sporting facilities was an agenda some time ago, this needs to be driven especially when considering details of our past and current spending (ie lack of spending). Increased scrutiny is likely when deciding the precept and the value the St. Albans Parish Council provides to the whole community. In the past few years, it has been highlighted on two occasions [financial auditor] that if the Parish Council are unable to demonstrate that they have clear aims and objectives with measurable outcomes, Gedling Borough Council may decide to reduce the precept allocated to this Parish Council.

Percept – 2024/25

It is my view that there should be no increase in the precept collected by St. Albans Parish Council in the coming financial year.

The Parish Council in recent years has failed to deliver any meaningful service, which is value for money and/or supports the whole community.

The precept collected for the last financial year, 2023/24 was £28.834. This represented a 0.9% increase on the previous years collection. The collection for that year, 2022/23 financial year saw the Parish Councils collection at £28,234. This was a -0.6% decrease from 2021/22.

It is again my view and recommendation that there should be 0% increase in collection for 2024/25.

Again many thanks for your work on this matter,

Kind Regards

Dave

Dave White

Councillor [Chairman]

St. Albans Parish Council [Gedling]
