



Helsby Parish Council

Budget Report: Justification of the Precept Request for Financial Year 2023/24

The Finance Committee is recommending that the Council maintains the same Band D precept charge as 2022/23 with a precept amount of £104,844 for 2023/24. This is 2.17% more than last year's precept of £102,615. Based on this precept amount, a Band D property will pay £49.32 which is the same amount as in 2022/23. Due to new house building in Helsby, the tax base has risen from 2,080.6 in 2022-23 to 2,125.8 in 2023-24, enabling payments to stay the same for residents. It is worth noting that the Council has maintained this charge of £49.32 since 2018/19 (see table below).

Year	Per Band D Property	Band D Properties	Total	Actual yield change
2018/19	£49.32	1960.3	£96,675	10.78%
2019/20	£49.32	2,023.50	£99,799	3.23%
2020/21	£49.32	2,032	£100,218	0.42%
2021/22	£49.32	2,046.70	£100,943	0.72%
2022/23	£49.32	2080.6	£102,615	1.66%
2023/24	£49.32	2125.8	£104,844	2.17%

The Council has been particularly mindful of the current cost of living increases experienced during 2022/23 and does not wish to overburden the taxpayer further with significant increases in the precept for 2023/24. We have taken this into account when budgeting by proposing to use some general reserves in 2023/24 (particularly in the 'higher cost' scenario as set out below).

For 2022/23, we expect a surplus from receipts of £4,874 (£158,154 budget vs £163,028 predicted at 31.3.23) and savings from payments of £2,859 (£133,873 budget vs £131,014 predicted at 31.3.23), giving a total of £7,733. Comparing predicted end of year income with predicted end of year expenditure, we expect there to be a surplus of around £32k (receipts of £163,028 less payments of £131,014). This is due largely to grant and S106 income and a higher than usual income from cemetery fees. However, an additional £9,000 may also be spent in 2022/23 at the Helsby Grant Show next month (this was moved from general reserves to earmarked reserves in 2021/22 to cover any Queens Jubilee expenses). If this is the case, and the full £9,000 is spent, we will have a deficit on payments of £6,141, and a lower total surplus of around £23k.

Any surplus will be used to supplement the Council's general reserves to act as a contingency for any unexpected inflation, unforeseen events and unusual circumstances. It is also worth noting that we have allocated £17.5k of general reserves monies in 2022/23 to earmark funds to the following future projects: a cemetery extension area design project (£5k); replacement of the cemetery garage roof (£7.5k) and a wheelchair accessible roundabout (£5k).

Receipts

The budget for Council income has been reduced from £158,154 in 2022/23 to £140,798 in 2023/24, largely due to no grant income being predicted in 2023/24. This year, a number of S106 reclaims and grant payments were received as a result of the implementation of the following projects: the parish field lighting project, the CCTV project in the play area and the completion of the 'Helsby The Art of Here' arts project (totalling around £26,202). Predicted income from VAT recovery has been increased

significantly for 2023/24 to £9,000 as a result of the lighting and CCTV projects (from £5,500 in 2022/23). Burial income was higher than anticipated in 2022/23 due to a large number of burials in Helsby Public Cemetery. Whilst future cemetery income is difficult to forecast, the budget for cemetery fees in 2023/24 has been increased significantly in line with the income levels this year (£7,000 for 2023/24).

Payments

The Council budgeted £133,873 in 2022/23 and it is anticipated that expenditure will be around £131,014 (plus a possible additional £9,000 depending on the outcome of the grant show). Along with the Council's usual annual expenditure (e.g. grass cutting, salaries, general maintenance, Christmas lights) we have implemented a number of projects this year including the provision of 6 new planters and 2 new noticeboards, completion of the Helsby the Art of Here arts project, CCTV in the play area, the parish field lighting project, repairs to the table tennis table at Sherwood Court and the purchase of a new defibrillator. We have been fortunate that a number of these projects have been supplemented by grant income and Section 106 monies (developer contributions). We have also offered start-up grant funding to Helsby Players and grant funding for the Queens Jubilee to St. Pauls Church.

We have considered two expenditure scenarios for the Council's expenditure budget in 2023/24. The first 'lower cost' option balances well with the planned income for 2023/24 (only a £395 deficit). This is only a small increase from last's year's budget - from £133,873 in 2022/23 to £141,193 in 2023/24. This includes all of the Council's usual expenditure with the exception of the Ho Ho Helsby Traffic Management service. One option would be for Ho Ho Helsby to apply for funding for this service through the Council's grant show. The second 'higher cost' option leaves a deficit of £14,788. This option includes the Ho Ho traffic management service, an additional £5,000 for an average speed camera project (total costs circa £50k) and some additional pension and salary commitments should the Council agree to increase the Clerk's working hours. The Clerk's hours will be discussed at her annual appraisal in January 2023. The Council's general reserves could be used to fund the 'higher cost' scenario.

Reserves and Future Projects

By the end of March 2023, the Council will have reserved £93,000 into earmarked funds. Some of this is for resilience planning, including future burial provision and play area improvements/upgrades. £9,000 will be placed in earmarked reserves in 2023/24 for the replacement of play equipment and resurfacing in the children's play area along with any costs associated with repairs to gates and railings (total fund now at £31k). £3,633 was allocated for future burial provision in 2022/23 and £4,105 will be allocated in 2023/24 (total fund now at £32k). The amount for burial provision relates directly to previous income from burial fees (and hence uptake of remaining cemetery space) and has increased for 2023/24 to 100% of income, rather than 50% previously.

A number of new projects have also been proposed for implementation in 2023/24. These are: landscaping work at Sherwood Court; a cemetery extension area design project; replacement of the cemetery garage roof and a wheelchair accessible roundabout. The Council also received some CIL monies in 2022/23 which have been allocated under earmarked reserves for future projects. Up to £12k of earmarked reserves will be spent in 2022/23 on a public consultation exercise, the Queens Platinum Jubilee and a grant show (where local groups and organisations can apply for grant funding from the Council).

The Council will update its 5-year Business Plan in 2023/24 using community input from the public consultation exercise carried out in 2022. This may also consider a number of other potential projects as suggested by local residents for future implementation.

For several years, the Council's general reserves have been increasing. These reserves cover the Council's cash flow and any contingency funds. They can also be used to offset the budget requirement, if necessary. It is recommended by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance that our general reserve should be maintained at between three and twelve months of net revenue expenditure. Our bank balance at 31 March 2022 was £200,442. It is expected that the balance as at 31 March 2023 will be £232,455 (or £223,455 if all the grant show money is allocated). With £93,329 in earmarked reserves in 2023/24, we will have a remainder of up to £139,126 in general reserves. It is recommended that the Council draws up a general reserves policy in 2023/24 in order to agree a level appropriate to our size, situation and risks and plans any future budgets so as to ensure that the adopted level is maintained.

Budget 2023/24

RECEIPTS

Budget Heading	Description	Budget 2022-23	Receipts as at 30.11.22	Predicted receipts at 31.3.23	Budget 2023-24
Code		£	£	£	£
101	Precept	102,615	102,615	102,615	104,844
102	Interest on accounts	900	185	1,281	1000
103	Rent on 'Eccies' etc	12,989	6,367	12,989	13,054
104	Grants	27,100	7,782	26,202	0
105	Insurance claims	0	0	0	0
106	Helsby Community Centre	4,300	1,688	3,180	4,000
107	Cemetery fees	3,000	6,680	8,230	7,000
108	Allotment rents	1,650	1,629	1,743	1,800
109	Sundries	100	306	306	100
110	VAT recovery	5,500	6,482	6,482	9,000
111	CWaC Council Tax Grant	0	0	0	0
112	Ho Ho Helsby	0	0	0	0
TOTAL		£158,154	£133,734	£163,028	£140,798

Explanation of significant variances (+/- 10% or above) between 2022/23 and 2023/24 budgets as follows:

102 Interest on Accounts - Interest received in 2021/22 was £649, expected to be higher this year as interest rates have increased. For example, interest rates on savings with the Natwest Bank are currently at 0.80%. Last year the rate was considerably lower at 0.05%.

104 Grants - Received Arts Council funds (£1,100), Protos grant for CCTV project (£4,000) and £2,681 in Community Infrastructure Levy payments. CW&C Members Budgets Grant also received for defibrillator (£1,500) plus S106 reclaim payments for parish field lighting project (£11,590) and Helsby the Art of Here (£5,331). No planned grant income as yet for 2023/24.

107 Cemetery fees - actual cemetery income in 2021/22 was £4,105. 2022/23 has been a considerably busy year for burials with income likely to be in excess of £8,000. Very difficult to forecast future income but increased the budget considerably taking this year's income into account.

110 VAT Recovery - increased to account for VAT recovery from parish field lighting and CCTV projects in 2023/24. VAT total is already at £7,469 and reclaim is likely to be in excess of £8,000 next year.

PAYMENTS

Budget Heading	Description	Budget 2022-23	Payments as at 30.11.22	Predicted payments at 31.3.23	Budget A 2023-24	Budget B 2023-24
Code		£	£	£	£	£
201	Allotment maintenance	3500	1950	2,530	3000	3000
202	Allotment water charge	500	236	356	300	300
212	Cemetery maintenance	3500	2408	3,608	3500	3500
212a	Cemetery repairs/renewals	400	720	820	1000	1000
213	Parks and general maintenance	12000	6843	9,943	12000	12000
214	Park grass cutting	5000	2800	2,800	5000	5000
215	Park equipment	3000	21871	22,291	2500	2500
218	Bedding plants	400	505	1,104	500	500
219	Village clock	300	0	0	0	0
220	Maltby Triangle / A56 land	1000	0	500	200	200
223	Litter/dog/grit bins	400	204	204	400	400
224	Village awards	200	0	0	200	200
225	Ho Ho Helsby Traffic Manage	1050	0	1,050	0	1100
226	Average speed cameras	5000	0	0	5000	10000
226R	Play area improvements/upgrades	8000	0	0	9000	9000
227	Bridge Lantern Lights	1000	518	1142	1000	1000
228	Christmas Illuminations	15500	649	11,708	15500	15500
228a	Christmas tree	3000	0	2,500	2700	2700
229	Sherwood Court Land	1000	1303	1,302	500	500
230	Street furn/BT Phone Boxes	10000	3757	5,991	6000	6000
231	War Memorial	0	0	0	0	0
232	CC – Light and heat	4460	2513	4005	5000	5000
233	CC – Repairs and renewals	2125	44	44	3000	3000
234	CC – Water charges	400	234	351	400	400
235	CC – Insurances	460	0	469	500	500
237	CC – Sundries	100	0	0	100	100
239	Hire charges (Meetings)	250	153	221	250	250
240	Cllr/employee training	1100	376	496	600	600
241	Salaries	30000	19322	29,321	31419	39042
241a	Clerk's annuity/pension	745	409	1,157	2247	2917
242	Council Office	630	424	424	700	700
243	Admin subscriptions	2900	3027	3,151	3000	3000
244	Admin car allowance	120	244	366	360	360
245	Admin stationery	100	47	79	100	100
246	Postage and phone	1000	564	863	1000	1000
247	Councillors' expenses	100	12	12	100	100
249	Admin sundries	250	214	254	250	250
250	Remembrance Day	250	242	242	250	250
251	External audit fees	550	400	400	420	420
251a	Internal audit fees	360	306	306	350	350
252	Insurance premium	1300	1314	1,314	1300	1300
253	Legal and professional	1000	0	500	1000	1000
254	Donations – s.137	200	1330	1330	200	200
256	Equipment	1000	615	914	1000	1000
258	Sundries	3000	3291	3,291	3000	3000
260R	Future burial provision	3633	0	0	4105	4105
261	Community projects	0	8014	8,014	5,000	5,000
262	Chairman's allowance	225	225	225	225	225
265	H&S, PPE etc	100	85	1555	500	500
267	Newsletter	2765	1914	3,861	3000	3000

268	Community centre projects	0	0	0	0	0
270	Neighbourhood Plan review	0	0	0	0	0
272	Office relocation	0	0	0	0	0
274	Community projects	0	0	0	0	0
275	Parish Election Expenses	0	0	0	3517	3517
276	VE Day	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL		£133,873	£89,083	£131,014	£141,193	£155,586

Figures in **bold** highlight the difference between Budget A and Budget B

Explanation of significant variances (+/- 10% or above) between 2022/23 and 2023/24 budgets as follows:

201 Allotment Maintenance - Contractor costs for 2023 season = £2,714. Reduced any ad-hoc maintenance costs by £500 this year as little maintenance is expected.

202 Allotment Water Charge - Difficult to predict as water usage is weather dependent and bills can fluctuate considerably from year to year. The amount has been decreased as total payments likely to be less than budgeted for in 2022/23.

212a Cemetery Repairs and Renewals - budget increased to account for memorial testing and any associated work in 2023 as well as alterations to the cemetery gate hinges.

215 Park Equipment - Budget significantly overspent due to CCTV and lighting projects (but these were largely covered by grants and S106 funds). Budget lowered slightly in 2023/24 as not anticipating any significant expenditure.

218 Bedding plants - Budget increased to account for additional planters purchased in 2022/23 and any potential new ones in 2023/24.

219 Village Clock - decision made in 2021/22 not to continue with annual servicing costs of the village clock. £300 set aside in 2022/23 in case of any maintenance/repair requirements. Decided not to allocate any funds to this in 2023/24.

220 Maltby Triangle - Reduced budget as grass cutting in this area is covered under Code 214.

225 Ho Ho Helsby Traffic Management - Consideration being given to withdraw this funding in order to cut back on HPC Christmas funding. Budget included under Option B.

226 Average speed cameras - An additional £5000 added under Option B as pilot project may cost around £50,000 over 5 years.

226R Play area improvements/upgrades - an additional £1,000 added to earmarked budget to fund any railing and gate maintenance work required in future years.

229 Sherwood Court Land - Reduced budget as grass cutting in this area is covered under Code 214.

230 Street Furniture/BT Phone Boxes - new projects to replace some village planters and to install a defibrillator in empty BT kiosk on Chester Road implemented in 2022/23. Some monies allocated in budget for possible additional new planters, benches and noticeboard for South Ward in 2023/24.

232 CC Light and heat - increased to account for significant increases in energy costs.

233 CC Repairs and renewals - CW&C carried out work for asbestos and fire remediation in 2020/21 but no invoice received as yet and costs unknown.

240 Councillor/Employee Training - Reduced as Clerk has now completed CiLCA training.

241 Salaries - Budget increased as Clerk has moved from SCP 26 to 29. Option B accounts for budget if Clerk increases her hours up to 37 hours per week. This will be discussed at the Clerk's annual appraisal in January 2023.

241a Pension - increased as Council resolved in November 2022 to increase the employer's contribution from 3% to 10%. Option B accounts for budget if Clerk increases her hours up to 37 hours per week. This will be discussed at the Clerk's annual appraisal in January 2023.

242 Council office - increased to account for significant increases in energy costs.

244 Admin car allowance - Increased budget significantly as Clerk now claiming mileage for evening meetings.

251 External Audit fees - reduced budget due to 5-year costs being confirmed by PKF Littlejohn.

260R Future burial provision - now set at 100% of cemetery income rather than 50%.

261 Community projects - allocated for a participatory budget event during 2023/24. Allocated under earmarked reserves in 2022/23.

265 H&S/PPE etc - increased budget to cover lone workers alarm and H&S training.

275 Parish election expenses - Covers any potential recharges from elections to be held in May 2023.

Claire Jones
Responsible Financial Officer
January 2023