

Meeting: Full Council

Date: 9th January 2024

Author: Town Clerk

Item For Consideration: Budget and Precept for 2024 to 2025

To agree the precept and budget for 2024/25.

1.0 Background Information

1.1 The council is required to consider its budget for the new year in detail and make its request to South Gloucestershire Council to collect the precept from the residents of Kingswood. The council has held two meetings where it has considered its overhead requirements for 2024/25 as well as discuss projects that it would like to deliver to benefit the residents of Kingswood. It unanimously agreed at the meeting on 12th December 2023 to increase the budget from £125,100 to £826,480 per annum. This now needs to be formally proposed, seconded and supported.

1.2 It was recognised that the initial precept that was allocated by SGC prior to the council being established was just for its first-year startup costs and did not make any provision for the delivery of any services or projects for a town the size of Kingswood. It is normal, and expected, for a council to offer a range of services and facilities and this can only be done with local funding through the precept, over and above the funding that merely meets the costs of the council's overheads (governance and insurance, staff, room hire etc). It was also recognised that Kingswood has the largest population of all the parishes in South Gloucestershire and one of the smaller precepts. Whilst there was no transfer of services or assets from SGC when the council was created, the council is ambitious in what it would like to deliver to the residents and can only do this with a budget that allows for growth. The council has only been in existence for 7 months and is still in the startup phase but intends to deliver a number of projects that will bring direct benefits to the people of Kingswood in the coming years.

2.0 Budget proposal

2.1 Young People Provision

The council has agreed that their main priority should be the support for children and young people in the town via supporting the organisations that provide opportunities to engage with a range of young people. In turn this would help eradicate some of the issues around safety and help create a programme of social renewal in Kingswood. Suggested projects include Youth centre-based activities, youth workers supporting schools, additional youth leadership to support those with learning disabilities and those who are vulnerable, to cover school holiday periods, and develop a youth café space. These projects will be developed on a trial basis to ensure that funds are focused and offer value for money, with monitoring and evaluation of any project that is supported.

Agreed sum: £360,000

2.2 Events

In addition to supporting the young people, the council wants to create a sense of pride in the town, by investing in, and supporting other groups to host, a range of events throughout the year, from parades, car boot sales to family fun days and a Christmas lights event.

Agreed sum: £55,000

2.3 Christmas Lights

The council will take over the management and delivery of the Christmas lights.

Agreed sum: £15,000

2.4 Library Support

The council has identified the value of access to a public library as a place and a service and is aware of the financial pressures that it is under, and the impact that a cut to this service would have on the residents. It wants to provide the library with additional funding that will reduce some of its pressures and enable it to deliver more outreach work in schools, greater access for the elderly as well as continue to offer the service as a Warm Space.

Agree sum: £30,000 per year for a period of three years.

2.5 Community Grant Scheme

The council has agreed that a community grant scheme can have an enormous impact on local community groups that deliver services, clubs and activities in Kingswood and wants to create a grant scheme as soon as possible to help local groups realise their ambitions and make an impact on the local residents.

Agreed sum: £50,000

2.6 Summer Planting Scheme

To provide summer floral displays across Kingswood Town Centre.

Agreed Sum: £12,000

2.7 Additional staff support

The council currently employs a full-time clerk only, but the projects that it wants to deliver can only be developed and come to fruition with additional staff support. In addition, the council has adopted a committee structure with more evening meetings that require staff input. The council has agreed that some part-time admin or finance additional support might be needed and budgeted accordingly (£24,000 including on costs).

In addition, the council has agreed a budget of a further £90,000 that can be used to engage both an events manager/planner (via an events agency or a contractor) and a Town Warden (via a contractor) to keep the town tidy, to undertake event related activities and to support the summer floral displays, the Christmas Lights event and general tasks within the town. These roles will evolve but it was agreed that it was essential to have funds that allow the council flexibility in its second year to develop its staffing team and ultimately move to directly employing additional staff.

Agreed sum: £114,400

2.8 Venue provision

The council is ambitious to eventually have its own building as a base, an office and with rooms for hire (to generate some income) and requires a reserve fund that will enable the council to make a credible bid for any building that might become available in the future.

Agreed sum: £75,000

2.9 Operating Cost

The council has agreed a budget for operating costs in year two as £115,080.

Agreed sum: £115,080

Code	Item	2023 to 2024		2024 to 2025	
		Budget for current year	Forecast to year end	Projected Underspent at year end	Draft Budget
200	Employee Costs (Clerk only)				
4000	Salary - Clerk /RFO	£36,667	£20,000	£16,667	£48,000
4020	Employer Pension contribution	£9,167	£4,000	£5,167	£9,600
4025	Employers National Insurance	£4,000	£2,200	£1,800	£5,280
4055	Expenses	£916	£1,000	-£84	£2,500
4060	Payroll Costs: Set-up	£200	£200	£0	£0
4065	Payroll Costs: on-going	£500	£500	£0	£800
4070	Avon Pension Fund set-up costs	£2,300	£2,300	£0	£0
	Employee Costs Total	£53,750	£30,200	£23,550	£66,180
300	Office Costs				
4100	Set-up Costs	£2,500	£1,500	£1,000	£1,500
4105	IT Software, Consumables, Sup	£2,000	£2,000	£0	£2,000
4110	Website	£1,000	£1,075	-£75	£300
4115	Website Annual costs	£500	£300	£200	£300
4120	Communication	£1,200	£500	£700	£4,800
4125	Postage, Freight & Courier	£100	£50	£50	£150
4130	Office Space Rent	£7,500	£0	£7,500	£7,500
4135	Printer Cost	£600	£300	£300	£500
4140	Printing Cost	£500	£100	£400	£400
4145	Insurance	£1,600	£192	£1,408	£1,200
	Office Costs Total	£17,500	£6,017	£11,483	£18,650
400	Administration/Governance				
4200	Election Costs: Initial	£34,600	£1,050	£33,550	£0
	Election costs: Future (into EMRs)	£0	£0	£0	£10,000
4210	Meeting Room costs	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£2,750
4215	Councillor Expenses	£500	£0	£500	£500
4220	New Councillor Packs	£500	£0	£0	£0
	Governance Total	£36,600	£2,050	£35,050	£13,250
500	Professional Fees				
4300	Subscription membership	£1,300	£1,000	£300	£3,800
4305	Audit & Accountancy Fees	£2,000	£1,500	£500	£1,400
4310	Staff/Councillor Training	£1,000	£750	£250	£1,800
4315	Cont - SGC Parish set up costs	£5,000	£2,800	£2,200	£0
4320	Locum Staff set up	£0	£6,160	-£6,160	£0
	Professional Fees Total	£9,300	£12,510	-£2,910	£7,000
600	Other Expenditure				
4400	Events Kit, printing, advertising etc	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£5,000
4405	Miscellaneous	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£0
4415	Contingency	£5,958	£2,500	£3,458	£5,000
	Other Expenditure Total	£7,958	£4,500	£5,458	£10,000
	Total	£125,108	£55,277	£69,831	£115,080

Chart: Operating costs for 2024/25

2.10 General and Earmarked Reserves

The council will create its first general reserve fund with any underspending from its first year. There is a requirement that all councils have a general reserve for the purpose of mitigating potential future unknown or predicted liabilities. It is also necessary to create an Earmarked Reserve for future election costs.

Summary of the above proposals

Youth Services	£360,000
Events	£55,000
Christmas Lights	£15,000
Support to the Library	£30,000
Community Grants Scheme	£50,000
Summer Floral Displays	£12,000
Additional staff/support	£114,400
Community Building reserve	£75,000
Operating costs	£115,080
Total	£826,480

Chart: Summary of budget proposals

3.0 Impact on the residents

3.1 The council tax levied on a Band D household in the first year was £14.99 per annum but as explained above, this was just to meet the initial startup costs of the council and did not allow for any project or service delivery.

The agreed precept of £826,480 will be charged to residents as follows. This is an indication and the exact sums charged might be slightly different.

Council Tax Bands							
Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
67% of band D	78% of band D	89% of band D	100%	122% of band D	144% of band D	166% of band D	200% of band D
Per year	Per year	Per year	Per year	Per year	Per year	Per year	Per year
£66.24	£77.12	£88.00	£98.87	£120.63	£142.38	£164.13	£197.75
Per month	Per month	Per month	Per month	Per month	Per month	Per month	Per month
£5.52	£6.43	£7.33	£8.24	£10.05	£11.86	£13.68	£16.48

Chart: Council Tax band costs

4.0 Communicating with the residents

4.1 As a new council, the council will need to ensure that it communicates with its residents. As part of the start up of the council it also needs to create a strategic vision and have some aims and objectives, that will culminate in the creation of a plan, with actions, moving towards creating an annual report, and measuring the performance and outputs of the above highlighted projects. The council has made a start in considering its strategic direction with the introduction of this budget, but it needs to formalize these into a plan. At the same time the council needs to create a community engagement and communication plan. A corporate plan and community engagement plan can't be created in a meeting, so

ideally the council needs to hold some workshops to start the process. It might be proposed that a working group is created that can start the process.

5.0 Recommendation

5.1 For the proposed precept of £826,480 for 2024/25 to be proposed, seconded and agreed and authority delegated to the Clerk to notify South Gloucestershire Council.

8.2 For Councillors to consider communication methods of the budget increase, and to agree if they wish to create a working party, or similar, to start planning how the council will create a corporate plan and a community engagement and communication plan.