



# Datchet Parish Council

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6<sup>th</sup> April 2025

## **RE: Precept Increase for 2025/2026**

Dear Resident,

Thank you for your email, we understand that the increase in the Parish Precept from £144,531 to £264,787 for the 2025/2026 financial year may be concerning, particularly in the light of the increases imposed by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, and we want to assure you that this decision was not made lightly.

As your Parish Council, we are deeply committed to maintaining the services and amenities that make Datchet a wonderful place to live. We would like to take this opportunity to explain the reasons behind this increase and how it will benefit our community.

### **Why Has the Precept Increased?**

As you are probably aware, the precept is the Parish Council's primary source of income, funding essential services and community projects within Datchet. This year, the increase has been necessary due to several key factors:

1. **Rising Costs:** The cost of maintaining our village, including grounds maintenance, public spaces, community events, insurance, and operational expenses, has risen significantly due to inflation and increased service costs.
2. **Investment in Community Projects:** The Parish Council has allocated additional funds for essential projects, including:
  - Cemetery improvements.
  - Grounds projects (Village Greens / Riverside).
  - Recreation Ground improvements and public safety enhancements.
  - Events funding to continue bringing the community together.
  - Christmas tree, village flowers, and Christmas Street lights to enhance the village environment.
  - Maintenance and upkeep of Datchet Parish Cemetery.
  - Employment of an additional staff member to help manage the cemetery
3. **Reserves and Financial Stability:** Best practice for financial management recommends that councils maintain reserves equivalent to at least three months of operating costs. Our reserves have been carefully allocated to ensure financial stability while still meeting the needs of the community.

## Internal Consultation with DPC Lead Members

We have over recent years been looking to enhance our processes for determining the level of spend required in each of the areas under our remit. This entails, as part of the budget process, detailed and ongoing dialogue with our Lead Members as to the level of spend, both in terms of day to day and project expenditure, which is reviewed and challenged internally. The Lead Members then present their draft budgets at a public meeting of the Finance Committee (see below).

## Public Consultation and Decision-Making Process

To ensure transparency and allow for public input, three Public Finance Committee meetings were held on 16th September 2024, 28th October 2024, and 2nd December 2024. These meetings were, as the DPC Finance Committee meetings always are, open to the public, and residents have the opportunity to raise questions and provide feedback. Following these meetings, the Finance Committee presented its recommendations to the Full Council on 16th December 2024, where the final decision on the precept was made.

All meeting dates are published one week before the meeting on the four noticeboards in the village, the Datchet Parish Council website, and more recently on the DPC Facebook page.

## Historical Precept Figures

To provide context, below is a summary of precept figures in previous years, with the annual cost to a Band D property included by way of illustration:

Year	Band D	Total Precept
2013/2014	£59.77	£126,651.00
2014/2015	£83.90	£176,650.00
2015/2016	£82.50	£176,650.00
2016/2017	£81.02	£176,650.00
2017/2018	£76.50	£167,817.50
2018/2019	£71.94	£157,817.50
2019/2020	£63.93	£142,817.50
2020/2021	£63.70	£142,817.50
2021/2022	£63.70	£144,272.00
2022/2023	£63.70	£144,531.00
2023/2024	£63.52	£144,531.00
2024/2025	£63.60	£144,531.00

It is important to note that the Parish Council has **not** raised the precept since the 2014/2015 financial year. In fact, over the years, the precept was gradually reduced and has remained at £144,531 since the 2022/2023 financial year. However, due to significant increases in the cost of services, the need to maintain the essential services the Council provides, and fund vital community projects, an increase for the 2025/2026 financial year was unavoidable. This adjustment is therefore necessary to meet rising operational costs, invest in key projects, and ensure the ongoing provision of services that benefit all residents.

## How Will This Affect You?

The precept increase means that for a typical Band D property (again Band D is being used for illustrative purposes), the annual cost will be **£116.58 (£2.24 per week)**. That is an increase of **£52.98** for the year, i.e. **£1.02 per week**. Below is a breakdown of the annual cost for each Council Tax Band:

Council Tax Band	Annual Cost
A	£77.72
B	£90.67
C	£103.63
D	£116.58
E	£142.49
F	£168.39
G	£194.30
H	£233.16

## What Is the Precept Spent On?

Your precept directly contributes to maintaining the following services:

- **Public Spaces & Parks:** Maintenance of Datchet Recreation Ground, Willowfields, Recreation Ground Ditch, Datchet Riverside, Village Greens, and the Community Orchard.
- **Buildings:** Maintenance and upkeep of properties that are the responsibility of Datchet Parish Council, including providing space for Datchet Library, The Bridge Café, Datchet Health Centre and other community services.
- **Play Areas & Sports Facilities:** Ensuring the safety and upkeep of play areas, tennis courts, and outdoor fitness equipment.
- **Community Events:** Supporting events such as Christmas on the Green, Santa's Sleigh Ride, The Ellis Car Journey and other village celebrations.
- **Public Amenities:** Including seating, litter bins, and maintenance of public footpaths and ditches.
- **Cemetery Maintenance:** Ensuring a respectful and well-maintained space for loved ones.
- **Christmas Tree, Village Flowers, and Christmas Street Lights:** Enhancing the community environment.
- **Local Safety Measures:** Such as defibrillators, CCTV, and flood prevention work.
- **Attracting and Hiring the Best Individuals:** Ensuring that skilled professionals are employed to carry out the work, including the Clerk/RFO, Finance Officer, Administration Assistant, Cemetery Warden, and Groundsmen.

## Ensuring Transparency and Accountability

Every year, internal and external audit are carried out to ensure the financial integrity and transparency of the Parish Council's operations. The internal audit is conducted by an independent auditor to review financial records and procedures, while the external audit is performed by an external body to provide an objective assessment of our financial standing and compliance with regulations.

Furthermore, as part of our commitment to continual improvement to our processes, we are keeping our finances and reserves under continual review, and not just during "budgeting season". A case in point is

we are currently reviewing all of our reserves, including those allocated for specific purposes (“earmarked reserves”) to ensure ongoing validity.

Datchet Parish Council is totally committed to financial transparency. Our budget is available for residents to review, and I have attached a copy with this letter. We welcome any additional questions you may have. We also encourage residents to attend Parish Council meetings where financial matters are discussed in detail.

The Finance Committee is a full Committee of the Council, and therefore meeting papers and minutes are available on the Datchet Parish Council website at the following link, by clicking on the relevant years;

[Meetings - Datchet Parish Council](#)

We appreciate your understanding and support in maintaining the services and community spirit that make Datchet a great place to live. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Parish Council office or me directly at [cllr.syoung@datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.syoung@datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk), and I would be happy to meet with you either at the Parish Office, or over a coffee, to take you through the attachments and/or to go over your concerns either now or at any time in the future.

**Please note:** Parish Council meetings are held every second Monday of the month, and the agendas for these meetings will be available on the website.

The next council meeting is on **Monday, 14th April 2025 at 7:00pm in York House, Grey Rooms, Sheet Street, Datchet, SL4 1BY**. Please note that this meeting is being held at a different location from our usual venue at Datchet Village Hall, due to unforeseen circumstances beyond our control.

Yours sincerely,



**Councillor Susan Young  
Chair of the Finance Committee  
Datchet Parish Council**

*Attached:*

- 1. Approved Budget for 2025-2026*
- 2. Budget and Precept Report for 2025-2026 - Presented at the council meeting on 16.12.2024*