Bournheath Precept – increase for 2025 to 2026

What is precept?

Precept is the term used for the tax collected by the District Council on behalf of Parish Councils, which is then paid to your parish in two payments, six months apart. The precept is shown under annual charges on your council tax notification letter.

The funds are used to meet the needs of the community, for Bournheath that's approximately four hundred residents and over 200 properties, covering the village of Bournheath and an additional area that extends up to the M5 (Lydiate Ash) and comprises of some roads, businesses and homes in Catshill and Wildmoor.
The entire county is divided into Parish, District (Bromsgrove) and County (Worcestershire) areas, every property will fall within each category and each level of council is responsible for deliverables to ensure communities are being supported. As your Parish Council, and the first level of government, we are responsible for things such as drainage, grass cutting of the recreation ground, seating and community events, such as the upcoming summer fete.

Using the precept, we hold responsibility for the ownership and maintenance of a number of assets in the village, supporting projects, hosting community events. Our only source of income is precept which is used to cover all council capital spend and expenses. In addition, we have a requirement to hold reserve funds for emergencies (£8,362.50 for 2025/2026) to be used to cover any urgent costs/outgoings such as flooding. Our current asset list is as follows:

- Flag pole and flags
- Neighbourhood Watch signs
- 4 Notice boards
- 2 Picnic benches
- 3 Roadside benches
- Village Hall gate
- 4 Roadside planters
- 2 Dog-waste bag dispensers
- Christmas lights
- Office equipment (including laptop and printer)
- Decommissioned phone box
- 3 Defibrillators and cabinets
- 3 White village gates
- Community centre land
- Flooding sacks (aqua sacks).

Prior to the year's budget review, a detailed audit was undertaken and it was found that a number of assets need repair/maintenance or replacement.

Precept Increase

There have been below-inflation increases in the precept since 2021/22 (just above 2% each year over the last 3 years), while costs have increased dramatically across all areas of Council spend. In addition, we are putting £3,000 into the budget to repair or replace some of the assets, including benches and noticeboards. Money is also being allocated to contribute towards a flood alleviation scheme, surveying and clearing out drains and culverts.

While the percentage increase for the Parish Council may look significant at 48.2%, for the average home in the area (Council tax band D) the increase is less than 50p per week.

Summary

The decision to increase precept was taken reluctantly. The increase was needed to ensure the community continues to run as needed without the council running into a deficit. We have a duty to serve our community and part of our legal responsibilities is to ensure that the finances are fit and proper. We did consider the cost of impact per the average household (Band D)and we are still below the national average for Town and Parish Council precepts (Over £90 per band D last year)

The past council committees have done a sterling job of keeping precept as low as they could, but it's no longer possible.

We will continue to work closely with District and County councils to access grants to help with projects, but these funds are not guaranteed and the situation may change with the County Council elections in May. Therefore, to allow for certainty and stabilise cash flow an increase in precept was requested.

The current financial year ends in March. We will be audited in May and the finances and audit outcomes will be published in June. Our finances are available for review at any time and a financial reconciliation statement is provided with each set of meeting minutes. However, if you wish to discuss the finances in further detail then please email the Clerk and a meeting will be arranged to discuss any concerns that you have.

Bournheath Parish Council
March 2025