

Godstone Parish work and funding

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From time-to-time Godstone Parish council receive questions about its finances and what it does with all the money it gets from the rates. Many of the questions are based on misconceptions and in order to set the records straight we felt it worthwhile to publish a short note to hopefully answer some of these questions.

Godstone Parish council is a civil local authority and is the lowest tier of local government. We are an elected corporate body and are responsible for the three villages of Godstone, South Godstone and Blindley Heath. We are made up of 9 unpaid councillors who are elected to serve for four years. We receive funding by levying a "precept" upon the council tax paid by the residents of the parish to the Tandridge district council.

The administration of the Parish Council is managed by our Clerk, a part time paid employee appointed by the council and is supported by a part time paid administrator. The Clerk acts in a combined statutory role of Proper Officer (secretary or chief executive) and Responsible Financial Officer (treasurer).

Godstone Parish has approx. 2,510 households and for the financial year 2021/22 the precept agreed was £67,633 which amounts on average (not taking account of house banding) to just under £27 per annum per household (52 p per week)

In addition to the fixed precept the council receives variable (and not guaranteed) additional income from the burial ground, wayleaves; rents; donations and CIL which has been budgeted at £19,924 for this financial year so giving a potential total income of £87,557.

The administrative cost of running the council and managing our assets in FY2020-21 was £34,266 which included things such as salaries, fulfilling audit requirements, Public Liability insurance, office expenses and rent, all of which enable us to deal with the many and varied issues that are directed to the Parish council as well as the statutory obligations. For FY2021-22 these areas of the budget are £35,803 from the precept.

In addition, we have other semi fixed costs for Grass cutting and maintenance of parish land, the care of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Blindley Heath and the burial ground, which in FY2020-21 was £19,345. For FY2021-22 these areas of the budget are £24,451 from the precept.

So for the current year, the parish council then has £7,379 left from precept funds plus any additional income to spend across 3 villages on all of the other areas for which we are responsible.

These responsibilities are many and can be divided into hard and advisory activities. The hard activities include additional issues related to caring for areas, the SSSI, Tilburstow Hill Common, all of the hundreds of trees on Parish council land, Godstone Green and the wagon pond; Blindley Heath common, war memorials and poppies, providing and maintaining car parks, allotments, a children's playground, grants to support local organisations and charities, benches and at Christmas we light up the villages.

The advisory activities include giving views, on behalf of the community, on planning applications and other proposals that affect the parish. We undertake projects and schemes that benefit local residents, and we alert relevant authorities to problems that arise or work that needs to be undertaken within the Parish and we help the other levels of local government to keep in touch with their local communities.

We try to do all of this with our limited resources, so when you perhaps wonder why the Parish Council hasn't done "this or that" please have a thought for our limited administrative and financial resources which deal with the vast range of Parish matters.