

# Windlesham Parish Council Meeting – Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2023

## Update for the residents of Bagshot, Lightwater and Windlesham from the Chair of Council - Councillor Alf Turner

First and foremost, I would like to wish **all residents a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year**. As I write the 3 village trees have been installed and lighting decorations turned on. The latter could have been an issue this year but for the fantastic work by the Parish Council team in making sure that emergency electrical work was completed. A BIG WELL DONE!

Find below my normal update for residents of Bagshot, Lightwater and Windlesham on our recent Parish Council meeting. This includes the position on several key projects and conclusions on the next year's budget and precept. I hope you find this useful and would welcome any comments either directly or through local councillors - see the links below for contact details.

### **1. Public Comments & Question Time**

The meeting started with comments and questions from members of the public in attendance. Although there were no members of the public present, we had a comment from a Windlesham resident relating to the Annual Parish meeting next year. There is more on this meeting including the date below in section 5.

### **2. Parish Council Budget for 2024-25**

This was one of the main agenda points and following much discussion, the Council agreed by a majority decision to set a budget of £505,201 for the financial year 2024-2025.

This equates to an indicative increase of less than 40 pence per week on the precept for a band D property, raising it from £41.76 to just over £60 per annum. These figures will be finalised and communicated to residents following confirmation of the 2024/25 tax base from Surrey Heath Borough Council.

Increasing the precept is not a decision that was taken lightly and is a result of ongoing inflationary pressures. The Parish Council is no longer able to absorb the rising costs, which has led to adjustments in budget allocations, to maintain service levels. Additionally, the proposed increase also reflects the anticipated costs associated with re-tendering of the greenspace contract, projects to restore Council assets (e.g. Lightwater Pavilion, Bagshot Chapel, and the Council Chamber), better communications and engagement, as well as more money for cemetery improvements.

Historically, Windlesham Parish Council precept has remained low with only small increases in recent years, and despite the proposed increase for 2024/25, Windlesham Parish Council's band D equivalent precept will still be approximately 26% lower than the 2023/24 national average.

### **3. Cemeteries improvements, reviews and Bagshot Chapel drainage**

The Windlesham Committee expressed concerns about the condition of their village cemetery and asked that any surplus generated from the cemetery, be reinvested in improvements. It was also requested that should the cemeteries not make a surplus additional funds be made available from the General Reserve. Members noted that Lightwater and Bagshot cemeteries in particular, needed investment and since financial projections indicated that the cemeteries will be running at a loss for 2023-24 and 2024-25 it was resolved to increase the 2024-25 budget by £75k (£25k per cemetery) to cover the cost of improvements.

The full review of the cemeteries discussed last month is now progressing to obtaining quotes from professional specialists. In the meantime, it was agreed to progress with a soakage test for the ground around the Bagshot Chapel which has significant drainage issues causing deterioration of the building.

### **4. Village Surgeries & Community Meetings**

Council agreed to fund a small amount for these meetings going forward where these could not be combined with other meetings. Members recognised that this is an important part of community

communication and engagement, which following recent criticism the Parish Council is working hard to improve.

#### **5. Annual Parish Council meetings**

The Annual Parish Meeting is a meeting of the electors and as per the Local Government Act 1972, may be convened by either the chairman of the parish council, by any two parish councillors for the parish, or by any six local government electors for the parish. In all of the above circumstances, the meeting is chaired by the Parish Council Chair, if in attendance.

To ensure clarity Members adopted specific Standing Orders to govern the procedures and the meeting was called for the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2024. Residents will be asked to submit requests for agenda items in the New Year.

#### **6. Greenspace Contract**

Following a review of the 3 village sub committees it was agreed to re-tender the current contract which applies across the Parish. The proposed tender will be by each village with 3 lots covering: 1) cemeteries; 2) greenspace, playground, and ponds; and 3) Other areas e.g. fly tipping, graffiti removal etc. Companies that decide to bid can do so across all 3 villages and lots. Although this is complex and will require additional management, the hope is that this will result in enhanced focus and maintenance of all areas in the future.

#### **7. Parish Twinning with a town in France**

The Council has received an invitation from a town outside Versailles, near Paris to develop a twinning relationship. It was agreed that this was an interesting opportunity, but more information is required.

#### **Next meeting & Events**

Lightwater Committee Meeting – 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Full Council Meeting – Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024

#### **IMPORTANT**

The Parish office will close for the Christmas period at 1pm on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2023 and will re-open on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2024.

In the event of an emergency during this period, please contact **Surrey Heath Borough Council Contact Centre** on **01276 707100**

**Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!**

Full details of Council meetings will be on the Windlesham Parish Council Website before the meeting with a link as follows: [Home - Windlesham Parish Council \(windleshampc.gov.uk\)](https://www.windleshampc.gov.uk)

#### **Contact details:**

[Bagshot Councillor contact details](#)

[Lightwater Councillor contact details](#)

[Windlesham Councillor contact details](#)

If you would like to contact Jo Whitfield, Clerk to the Council or visit the office please use the link below to view the office opening hours and contact details:

[Contact Us - Windlesham Parish Council \(windleshampc.gov.uk\)](#)

Alf Turner

Chair of Windlesham Parish Council

5<sup>th</sup> December 2023