

**WINSHAM PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013**  
**At the Jubilee Hall, Winsham.**

**2499 ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES**

Those present: -           Mr John Chance                           Chairman  
                                  Mr John Gapper                         Vice Chairman  
                                  Miss Trish Baxter  
                                  Mr John Sullivan  
                                  Mr Michael Dunkin  
                                  Mr Nathan Mode  
Parish clerk:               Mrs Elaine Willis  
District Councillor:  
County Councillor:  
Public:  
Apologies:                 Mrs Mary Haggard, Mr Andrew Partridge

All councillors present signed the dispensation form allowing them to discuss and subsequently set the precept for the next financial year.

**2501 Information re: precept setting**

Councillor John Chance presented the points below for discussion

1. Central government will be cutting local authority expenditure by around 10% next year.
2. In the case of parishes like ourselves, this will be done by changing the basis of how we calculate the precept.
3. Last year, we were required to calculate the precept by dividing our expenditure by 306.68 (the tax base), which is the theoretical number of households in the parish, and this gave a band D charge of £44.53.
4. For the next financial year our tax base has been reduced by 25.27 which equates to the national council tax benefit being paid in the parish.
5. At the moment, the decisions on national council tax benefit are all decided above our level, but in the future the benefit will be known as the local council tax support scheme and it isn't yet clear on how it will be administered.
6. The change in the way that the calculation now has to be made means that if we keep the precept at its current level, our income will drop by £1125 to £12,530.
7. For next year only, the government is going to give us a grant to make up the loss of income.
8. Problems are likely to arise in the following years, when we are unlikely to get a grant to make up the difference.
9. In recent years we have kept increases below the rate of inflation, in comparison, the other 10,000 parishes in the country raised their precept by an average of 2.1% last year to £45.88.

Councillor Gapper questioned the chairman's interpretation of some of the assumptions underlying precept setting. The Chairman responded by saying that the process of setting the precept for next year had been delayed and affected by changes imposed by Central Government and this had made the situation unclear. In an attempt to clarify the situation, he had summarised into the nine points listed above information provided by the SSDC at a

seminar attended by Councillor Mode, advice from SALC, and media articles including some published by other councils.

Councillor Mary Haggard arrived and signed the dispensation form.

Questions and comments arising from the above:

Councillor John Sullivan commented that it may be possible to fund-raise to cover the possible shortfall in the precept handed back to the Council.

Councillor Michael Dunkin commented that it might be possible to cut expenses in future years, and asked about the possibility of paying off the PWLB loan from reserves.

Councillor John Gapper responded that the Parish Council had adequate reserves to top up any shortfall in funding. The Clerk advised that the monies held back by the Council consisted of provisions for expenditure on the war memorial, the lower recreation ground multiplay equipment, the acquisition of the band hut and allotments, and in addition we have been recommended by the external auditors to keep a baseline balance of £4000.

Councillor John Chance reported that he had spoken with SALC and had been informed that on average parish precepts were being increased by 2% in Somerset. He expressed concerns that if we didn't raise our precept to cover cost inflation, then in future years we could run at a deficit as there is no promise of a continuing grant to cover the money which is going to be held back from us by central government.

Councillor John Sullivan said that we had to set the precept for this year tonight, but we should continue to look in depth at expenditure and income for next year. *Action: clerk to put precept on the agenda for the next PC meeting.*

### **2503 Precept**

Councillor John Gapper proposed to keep the precept the same as last year. The motion was not seconded.

Councillor John Sullivan proposed that we increased the precept by 2%, seconded by Councillor Michael Dunkin.

Councillor John Gapper voted against the proposal. Councillors John Chance, John Sullivan, Mary Haggard, Trish Baxter, Nathan Mode, Michael Dunkin voted for the proposal

*Action: precept set at £13928 for 2013/14*