

Weston with Gayton Parish Council - Precept 2020/21

The Weston with Gayton Parish Council annual precept for 2020/21 has been set at £37,773. A full breakdown of expenditure is available on the Weston with Gayton Parish Council website at www.westonstaffs.org.uk

This amount represents a 14% increase in Weston and a 15% increase in Gayton. In real terms this equates to an annual increase per band D property of approx. £8.32 for Weston and £6.61 for Gayton or an extra 16 pence per week for Weston and 13 pence per week for Gayton.

The annual budget enables the Parish Council to provide a range of services. The largest proportion of the budget is spent on Grounds Maintenance. Since 2017 the Grounds Maintenance budget has increased from £16,082 to £17,792. This budget covers all grass cutting, verge maintenance, hedge maintenance, maintenance of the Village Hall grounds in both Weston and Gayton as well as grass cutting and hedge maintenance at both St. Andrew's and St. Peters Church. Since 2017 central government funding to Staffordshire County Council has been dramatically reduced and as a result the County Council have stopped providing any village maintenance. Whereas previously all verge maintenance, hedge cutting and removal of path and pavement vegetation was undertaken by the County Council it now falls to the Parish, or will not be undertaken at all. As a result the Grounds Maintenance contract has had to expand to encompass this extra work. In addition recent extreme weather has led to increase in tree maintenance and removal, all of which add to this cost.

A substantial increase has also been added to the 2020/21 budget for repairs and maintenance of the play equipment. The Parish Council own and maintain all the play equipment on the village green as well as the skate park and the Multi Use Games Area. They are responsible for conducting weekly safety inspections as well as three full independent safety inspections per year. The cost of these independent inspections has increased over the past year and the age of some equipment provides additional challenges in terms of repairs and maintenance. The budget has therefore been increased to reflect the additional costs required to repair, maintain and where necessary replace equipment. The safety of children in the village remains the highest priority.

An additional £1000 has also been added to the budget to enable the Parish Council, in conjunction with other neighbouring Parish Councils to undertake some drain and gully clearance. Again, as a result of the reduction in funding for the County Council, gully and drain maintenance will now only be carried out by the County Council on a three year basis for most of the gullies and drains in the village. The Parish Council felt that this will lead to increased standing water and possible flooding to properties, and therefore made the decision to increase the precept to enable some additional gully cleaning of key priority/problem drains to be undertaken.

Another service that has lost funding from the County Council is Rights of Way. Footpath maintenance will now be targeted at category A and B footpaths. Almost all of those in Weston and Gayton are Category C, which means no routine maintenance or upkeep will be undertaken. Therefore an additional £200 has been included in the Gayton budget for the past two years to enable some basic maintenance to be undertaken.

In addition to the service above the Parish Council respond to planning applications, empty the dog bins, pay for the Christmas Lights on the tree at the Village Hall and with the Village Hall organise the Christmas Lights switch on event, play a significant role in Remembrance Sunday, liaise almost daily with the County and Borough Councils to ensure issues of concern are addressed in the village. They have provided the equipment and fixed signage for the Community Speedwatch programme, they have purchased and installed the speed indicator device on the A51 and A518 and they paint and maintain the bus shelter and all street furniture including park benches, flower planters and a number of notice boards.

They also must fully understand and comply with all relevant government legislation including the accessibility requirements for the website, financial regulations including the annual internal and external audit, compliance with the pensions regulator, compliance with the General Data Protection regulations and a wealth of other administrative duties.

The Parish Council has one paid employee, working 11 hours a week. Councillors are unpaid and other than training costs do not claim for the general costs they incur in role as Parish Councillors.

All Parish Council meetings are open to the public and the public are actively encouraged to come along and give their views. There is an open public participation section at every meeting. Details of all meetings are available on the website at www.westonstaffs.org.uk

There is currently one vacancy on the Parish Council in the Parish of Gayton. If anyone would be interested in joining the Parish Council please contact the Parish Clerk at parishclerk@westonstaffs.org.uk or call 0759 400 2590.