



Marden Parish Council

Serving the Community

Budget Newsletter

A Few Words from the Parish Council.

The Marden Parish Council would like to Thank All the parishioners who regularly support the community events come rain or shine. Another huge thank you must go to the countless volunteers within the community, be those helping with the Community HUB, Repair Café or at all the Events, the work they do is truly amazing and without their support and help, Marden would be a much duller place.



BUDGET & PRECEPT FOR 2024 – 25

Every year the Parish Council must set an annual budget for the following year and as a matter of good practice it should consultant with its parishioners.

Marden Parish Council has always strived to be open and honest in all its decision making and welcomes ideas and comments from the whole community. This intern to help improve the environment we all live in and helps to enhance everyone's quality of life.

Summary

This document sets out the achievements over the last twelve months against the **Business Plan agreed in July 2022** and details the Budget and Precept proposed for 2024 -25.

The current Business Plan and Vision form the basis for the analysis provided within this document.

The last year has seen the community at the centre of Parish Council activity. We are grateful to all the volunteers who have helped us to achieve our aims. Most notable of the new activities has been the setting up and running of the physical Hub in the heart of the parish along with the monthly Repair Café. Community events have again been run and have been very well attended, most notably over the Coronation Weekend, with a very successful race night on the Saturday followed by a excellent and well attended "Coronation Tea" on the Sunday.

The following provides a summary of the main achievements over the last twelve months against the Business Plan targets and looks at how the work in 2024-25 will be funded.

Several activities are predicted to underspend the agreed budget for 2023-24 This largely relates to the Community Facilities Project being put on hold until the planning application has been approved and an acceptable funding plan put in place following the poll of parishioner views undertaken in February 2022.

The underspend will be put aside in reserves to assist in the new community facilities development now that the planning application has been approved.

The following outlines the main achievements against the six main areas of the Business Plan.

Planned Activity	Achievements in financial year 2023-24 to date
Communication & Management	2023 has seen the Parish Council employ a new Clerk following the resignation of the previous incumbent. We have maintained and expanded the Parish Council and Community websites and key working groups have provided monthly articles in N&V with many also posted on both the Parish Council and Community Facebook pages.
Planning	A number of planning applications have been reviewed in the year, those that meet our NDP requirements have been supported with a number objected to, in most cases because proposals have been outside the settlement boundaries. We continue to follow up planning enforcement when appropriate to ensure planning conditions are met.
Finance	The Internal audit provided a detailed and helpful review of the 2022-23 accounts. It is hoped that during 2023-24 financial year we will hold both an interim and final internal audit. We have moved to Unity Trust Bank in order to take advantage of improved security and earn interest on reserves. We now employ a payroll provider to administer the clerks salary and have begun using a cloud based accounting system.
Maintenance	Lengthsman costs have been running to the agreed plan. 2022/23 will see an additional drainage grant being used to clear grips and gutters.
	The Parish Footpath Officer, supported by landowners and Balfour Beatty, has continued the work of maintaining both the parish footpath and bridleway networks to a very high standard. The Parish Council funded 5 new gates in 2022-23 and has plans to fund a further 3 new gates in 2023-24. The parish also saw the appointment of a new Tree Warden.
Roads & Traffic	Speeding through the parish remains an issue and the Parish Council will be looking for appropriate traffic calming measures when funds become available from the New House Farm development. The Parish Council finally received Herefordshire Councils report on bridge strikes to Laystone bridge, unfortunately there are no new initiatives, but a reinforcement of measures implemented in 2011.
Major Projects	The community facilities project (new centre and village green on land to be gifted as part of the New House Farm Development) remains the key project of the Parish Council. Most of the last year has been spent looking at new ways to fund the project by a cross parish group consisting of representatives from the Marden Village Trust, the Primary Academy, the Pre School, and the Parish Council. Plans are in place to present this to the Parish at a Marden Village Trust Extra-ordinary meeting. The planning application for the New Community Centre and village green has been approved and the project will now restart.
	An update to the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) was started in early 2022 with the aim of following Herefordshire Councils Core Strategy Update consultation process. It is anticipated that the group will need to run a full call for sites process following Herefordshire Council setting new housing target for Marden which will now not take place until mid-2024
Marden Links Parish Hub	The hub has seen the transition for virtual to physical and has been highly successful in meeting the vision and objectives of supporting our community.
	With the help of a Herefordshire Council grant and an army of willing volunteers, we have started a Repair Café. Running since June, this has been very successful. We have support and volunteers from surrounding parishes and have plans to expand further.
	The Environment & Sustainability group has merged with the Marden Links working group as many of the objectives and volunteers are the same. The group has continued to concentrate on providing environment information to parishioners via News & Views and Facebook pages. Parishioners are being encouraged to join the "Great Collaboration" web portal allowing everyone to get involved and help meet Herefordshire Council climate change and environmental targets.
	The land behind the Hub has been acquired on a long lease and will allow the Parish Council to provide a community garden. Plans are currently being developed with input from the community. To date the land has been cleared of vegetation and appropriate fencing costed and agreed. The target opening date is May 2024.

BUDGET 2024 – 2025 OBJECTIVES

1. The new Clerk is recently qualified which will allow the Parish Council to retain its General Power of Competence and help to facilitate future projects.
2. Actions that mitigate climate change and improvements to biodiversity remain the highest priority.
3. Develop and implement new community facilities now that planning has been approved, and a funding plan agreed.
4. Continue to improve communications with parishioners and local businesses:
 - a. Online by continual improvement of both the Parish Council and Marden Links websites, improving the use of the parish council Facebook page and providing one to one or group training on how to use the internet safely.
 - b. Continued use of N&V and noticeboards to provide summary information that is not time critical.
 - c. Provide face-to-face information sessions on climate change actions, the environment, and areas of general community support.
5. Continue to provide events that will bring the community together.
6. Continue to identify and implement improvements to the Parish, examples being:
 - a. Develop a Community Garden.
 - b. Expand the Repair Café offering.
 - c. Expand the Hub activities.
7. Continue to use the Lengthsman Scheme to main roads, verges, pavements, and public rights of way.
8. Develop a feasible transport plan to improve road safety and protect or ancient bridges while involving Sutton St Nicholas and Moreton-on-Lugg as appropriate.
9. Continue to make appropriate grants to organisations within the Parish.

Key Assumptions in preparing the 2024-25 Budget.

THE BASE PRECEPT £38,000 (excludes the portion related to the potential loan on the new community facilities) WILL BE INCREASED BY £4,000 GIVING A TOTAL PROPOSED PRECEPT FOR 2024/25 OF £55,500.

The current precept of £51,500 has not been increased for several years while costs in general have risen significantly.

Staff and Councillor Costs

- Clerk's salary: allowance has been made for the National agreed pay agreement with an additional uplift due to promotion following CiLCA qualification.
- Expenses reduced, largely due to a reduction in travel.
- Councillor training: continue ongoing training as appropriate.

Administration & Management

- Room Hire: assumed higher due to increase in working group activity, mainly Neighbourhood Development and Community Facilities.
- Increase in administrative costs due to the use of a new accounting system (Scribe) and Payroll Agency for improved controls.
- Assumed increase in insurance costs of 20%

Parish Maintenance

- Lengthsman work to remain the same as last year but assume a 10% inflationary increase.
- Footpath and Bridleways: The Parish Council will continue to support improvements to footpaths and bridleways based on advice from the footpath officer. The budget includes funding for another three gates.

Parish Services

- N & V printing assumed to increase in line with inflation but any increase in costs is assumed to be more than offset by increased advertising revenue.

Projects & Working Groups

- Marden Links provides a Community Space with kitchen, an office and storage space. In the last year the usage has been expanded to include a Repair Café and development of a community garden. The Environmental and Sustainability Group activities have been added as the overall objectives are the same. Much of the setup has been funded by grants and the overall costs are seen to remain static.
- The work of the Transport group will be to identify and implement appropriate short-term solutions as well as identifying ways to utilise the NHF development S106 and will therefore be included in the activities of the Community Facilities Group.
- The Fundraising & Events group will continue to look for events that bring the community together while working to raise funds for the new community facilities.

- Since 2017 £13500 has been taken annually to assist in the development of a project proposal and support loan repayments on a public Works Loan of up to £300k. The planning application for the Community Centre and Village Green has been approved and work with the construction phased planned to start in the late summer of 2024 a loan application will be submitted. Current interest rate will mean the precept will need to be increased by £10,000. A full project budget will be developed and managed as appropriate.
- The Neighbourhood Development Group will aim to update the 2016 plan to reflect the changes made to Herefordshire Councils Core Strategy The target is to have consulted with the parish at several key stages (Regulation 14 and 16) prior to an independent review followed by final referendum.

Other

- The level of contingency reflects the need for some flexibility.

BUDGET & PRECEPT FOR 2024-2025

(THE DRAFT BUDGET EXCLUDES ALL COMMUNITY FACILITIES PROJECT COSTS OTHER THAN ACCOUNT FOR MONIES IN PRECEPT)

SUMMARY	Detail	Original 2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Draft Budget	% Change from 2023-24	Estimated actual spend 2023-24
Payments	Detail				
STAFF & CLLRS	Clerk's salary & expenses and councillor training	£11,500	£10,900	-5%	£10,357
ADMINISTRATION & MANAGEMENT	Insurance, subscriptions, room hire, website, stationery, postage, audit fee and elections	£3,200	£3,750	+17%	£2,768
MAINTENANCE & PROW	Lengthsman, PROW, volunteer & parish enhancement	£10,000	£10,000	0%	£12,118
PARISH SERVICES	News & Views	£2,700	£3,091	+14%	£2,810
GRANTS	Small grants, MVT & MRGT support, support for maintenance of Old Churchyard	£1,450	£1,450	0%	£1,150
PROJECTS & WORKING GROUPS	Hub, Repair Cafe & Garden, Setup & Running Costs and E&S group	£11,450	£11,500	0%	£12,228
	Traffic Management (incl with community facilities costs)	£300	£0	-100%	£0
	Community Facilities Group and Project	£13,500	£13,500	0%	£13,500
	Fundraising & Events Group	£2,000	£2,200	+10%	£2,000
	Neighbourhood Development Plan	£6,000	£6,000	0%	£0
CONTINGENCY	Contingency	£1,510	£6,703	+231%	£1,314
OTHER	VAT		£9,370		£8,554
	TOTAL PAYMENTS (Expenditure)	£63,610	£78,464	+16%	£66,799
Funded By					
	Precept	£51,500	£55,500	+8%	£51,500
	Solar Farm	£2,910	£2,910	0%	£2,910
	News & Views advertising	£1,500	£1,500	0%	£1,500
	Other – donations to CF, VAT reclaim, etc.	£4,000	£11,054	+176%	£5,868
	Neighbourhood Development Grant	£4,000	£4,000	+0%	£0
	Repair Café Grant				£2103
	Drainage Grant & Repair Cafe				£2,118
	Interest Income on reserves	£0	£3,500	+100%	£800
	TOTAL FUNDS (Income)	£63,610	£78,464	+16%	£66,799

Note: For 2024-25 budget VAT estimates have been included for the first time in the budget