

JG/KB/281016/MARCUS JONES MP

28 October, 2016

Marcus Jones, MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, DCLG
Department for Communities and Local Government
2nd floor NW, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street,
London SW1P 4DF

Dear Marcus,

2017/18 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT TECHNICAL CONSULTATION

I am writing to you directly with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) response to your 2017/18 Local Government Finance Settlement Technical Consultation.

Summary

- NALC resolutely opposes the government's proposals to extend council tax referendum principles to any size of parish or town council.
- Parish and town councils provide cost effective, value for money local services and democratic community representation, whose budgets total just 1.7% of overall council tax, with the average parish and town council charging just £54.15 per year for a Band D property.
- The proposals will seriously damage the ability of communities to respond to current and future needs and priorities such as neighbourhood planning (including delivering additional housing), protecting and enhancing local assets and services, as well as undermining local democracy and the vital community leadership role of parish and town councils.
- This is a disproportionate, expensive and bureaucratic proposal costing potentially millions of pounds to deal with an increase in the small share of council tax which equates to an average of just 6 pence per week.
- Rather than keeping council tax down the proposals will have the opposite effect which may lead to parish and town councils increasing their precepts by £5; not least to cover possible future costs of referendums.
- Referendums are an expensive – upwards of £1.25 per elector - and overly simplistic mechanism for involving and engaging local people in the complexity of financing local services. Parish and town councils already consult and communicate with residents and the government should work with NALC to promote good practice.
- We welcome the government's recognition that assets and services are being transferred from principal councils to parish and town councils and this is contributing to increases in

costs by parish and town councils. However the limited detail set out in the proposals does not adequately reflect the complexity and timescales involved, transfers of responsibility or increased spending from other public services, or the general growth in services provided by parish and town councils.

- Principal councils are being offered greater financial certainty through a multi-year settlement and the government should extend this approach to parish and town councils with the final local government settlement decision on council tax referendum principles applying for the rest of the Parliament instead of being revisited on an annual basis.
- NALC formally requests that you publish details of the complaints you have received about increased precepts for last year and make available any equality impact or rural proofing assessments you have made of these proposals.
- NALC is keen to work with you to find alternative sources of income for parishes and to have a constructive dialogue about how we can work together to meet your overall objectives without introducing these proposals which will be hugely unpopular, expensive and discourage people from getting involved as councillors and stop councils participating fully in neighbourhood planning, localism and devolution.

1. **Introduction and context**

2. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) is the nationally recognised membership and support organisation representing the interests of around 10,000 parish and town councils and many parish meetings in England.
3. Across England parish and town councils are doing a brilliant and important job improving their areas, such as: building community resilience and planning for emergencies; increasing house building through neighbourhood planning; providing local transport schemes; keeping people safe and crime down through community safety and CCTV schemes; supporting and working with businesses to boost the local economy, tourism and help for the high street; connecting people locally and globally and helping them save money through mobile and broadband projects; contributing to or running libraries; organising community events and festivals to bring people together and promote community cohesion; managing parks and open spaces; helping meet health and social care needs and making places dementia friendly; or giving grants to help local groups, charities and civil society organisations to thrive.
4. I have enclosed a copy of [LGC's Power to the People](#) special report along with NALC's Star Councils [2015](#) and [2016](#) brochure which celebrate and shine a spotlight on the work and activities of parish and town councils.
5. Significantly parish and town councils are providing all of the above and often more for an average cost to residents of just over a pound per week.
6. Therefore I have been pleased that in the last few weeks the work of parish and town councils has been recognised and acknowledged by government.

7. Your ministerial colleague the housing and planning minister Gavin Barwell MP acknowledged and praised parish and town councils in his recent open letter:

“Parish councils play a vital role in local communities. You have been champions of neighbourhood planning in recent years and I’ve been impressed by the way you have grabbed opportunities to use this with both hands.”

8. And just last week in a recorded speech to NALC’s annual conference you said:

“I want to both acknowledge the fantastic work many of you are doing in bringing local devolution to life and encourage the further spread of this ‘localist revolution’. You are the champions of local, visible action – demonstrating that it is possible to fix the street lighting or install CCTV, or use community action to save a post office or pub or set the planning agenda in your area.

Further, by making that direct connection between local issues and local action, you help counter that oft voiced concern that ‘all politicians are the same’. This helps prove to electors that voting matters, which can only benefit everyone. Also, since costs are generally lower at parish/town levels, you have greater freedom to innovate.”

9. Providing these community benefits comes at a cost which residents are prepared to pay and may be threatened by these proposals. For example, Bodmin Town Council’s plans to invest £100,000 in a new wireless CCTV facility will now cost £120,000 because of the requirement to hold a referendum.
10. It is important to recognise that parish and councils account for just 1.7% of the £26 billion raised through council tax in England, and while delivering the wide range of services outlined above have actually demonstrated real fiscal responsibility in recent years with overall increases in precepts actually going down: 5.3% in 2013/14, 4.3% in 2014/15 and 3.3% in 2015/16.
11. Nevertheless our small share of council tax did rise this year by 6% this year – just 6 pence per week on average – and is due to significant new pressures on parish and town council budgets. This is principally as a result of local councils taking on services from principal councils, a general growth in their role from responding to local needs and priorities and through council tax support funding not being passed on to them by principal councils. Thame estimates an additional 2% was levied on its precept last year to meet the withdrawal of council tax support grant by the district council, a finding confirmed by Newhaven Town Council that increased its precept last year by an additional 2.05% for this reason. And of course this trend is set to continue as more districts cease to passport these funds. Other cost drivers have increased precepts too including unavoidable ones resulting from government initiatives including pensions, national insurance and the living wage.

Case study thumbnail

Darley and Menwith Parish Council in Yorkshire increased their precept by 170% to support the local Playing Fields Association with a grant to replace the roof on the sports pavilion as it was in a critical condition and essential to allow sports teams to keep using it. They were also able to put a shop and post office into the pavilion. Only 2 residents even enquired about the precept rise and were satisfied with the answer. Others who heard about what has been done have been pleased that their money has been used for the obvious good of the village.

12. During our recent meeting with you Sevenoaks Town Council highlighted the additional services they were providing for an extra £2 per week per resident – public toilets, a theatre which attracts 300,000 visitors to the town and local economy, a bus service and development of a neighbourhood plan – and which followed extensive communications and consultation with local people including through a dedicated leaflet (Attached).
13. Results from our survey of the 120 councils show just two thirds levied an increase in excess of 2% or £5 and in most cases this was directly due to a reduction in council tax support funding or taking on new services from principal councils, with grass cutting, maintenance of public toilets and running the library the most commonly cited devolved assets or services. And half of respondents said they expected to be taking on new responsibilities from their principal councils in 2017/18.
14. As set out above, loss of council tax support funding is placing a pressure on council budgets. The government's independent review of council tax support schemes published its report in March 2016 and stated:

“Not all councils are passing on LCTS funds to parishes. This results in uncertainty and added budget pressures for parish councils. It has also led in some cases to parishes significantly increasing their precept.”
15. According to the government's own information contained in 'DCLG revenue outturn data: council tax support grant to parishes', of the original £40.5m provided by the government to billing authorities to pass on to parish and town councils, £39m was passed on in 2013/14, £31m 2014/15, £29.8m in 2015/16 and an estimated £20.2m in 2016/17.
16. This equates to an overall decrease of £18.8m in council tax support funding since 2013/14 and accounts for nearly a quarter of the overall increases in precepts during the same period.
17. Given these pressures I would be keen to work with you to explore how we can alleviate the financial pressures on parish and town councils and promote other ways to fund local projects through grants, community shares and crowdfunding and borrowing.

18. I would also still urge you to reconsider how communities can benefit from development by providing parish and town councils with a share of New Homes Bonus and Community Infrastructure Levy and to recognise their contribution to local growth and economic development by receiving a proportion of business rates.
19. I'm afraid I still do not understand the motivation for bringing forward these proposals in terms of expressed discontent by Members of Parliament or electors. Feedback we have received from our councils shows where increases have been proposed and explained clearly, very few complaints are actually received.

Case study thumbnails

In Sevenoaks, Kent a 19% increase by the award winning town council triggered one complaint. The Wiltshire parish of Amesbury increased its precept by 18%; this led to a single query to the council. Thame Town Council in Oxfordshire – which led the development of an ambitious neighbourhood plan – saw just two people query an increase of 10%. In Barnstaple, Devon an increase of 18% by the town council resulted in just 1 complaint.

20. We are not aware of a single instance where an MP has raised a concern directly with one of our parish or town councils over an increase in their precept. Indeed it would be most helpful – and consistent with the government's own transparency agenda – to receive from you an indication of how many complaints you have received from MPs and residents about increases and where those have happened. A proposal of such significance as this to the wider localism and devolution agenda should be evidenced based.
21. It will come as no surprise to you that NALC is resolutely opposed to your proposals, which amount to a centralist sledgehammer to crack a nut, and which have been greeted by England's 80,000 local councillors as a hammer blow to local democracy and their democratic role to make decisions on spending priorities and work with the local community to identify and meet local needs.
22. Instead the government should be supporting not undermining councillors and their important role improving communities. Much progress has been made by the Conservative-led coalition government and the Conservative government to decentralise power away from Whitehall and promote localism including developing the role of parish and town councils. A number of successful policy areas we have supported and worked with the government on include neighbourhood planning, the new local audit regime, extending the Sustainable Communities Act, the My Community programme including Our Place, making it easier to set up new parish and town councils, the Local Council Award Scheme and new arrangements to support a sector-led approach to improvement, reforms to parish poll rules, and devolution including onward devolution of services to parish and town councils.
23. I want to build on all this positive work and progress and see the government celebrate and support, rather than hinder and undermine, our parish and town councils and their councillors.

24. Promoting the consultation and developing our response

25. I am deeply concerned about the manner of the consultation itself, including the title of the consultation and the timescale. I have received significant levels of feedback on this from our councils and county associations and wanted to draw these to your attention.
26. The proposals are simply not just a technical matter. Rather they are a profound policy proposition and have significant implications for communities and public services and should have been treated as such, rather than being hidden and presented as a small part of a consultation whose content is aimed largely at principal councils.
27. The consultation was posted to your Department's website and there has been limited effort to promote it. Given the importance and significance of the proposals the six week timescale has been too short to allow some councils to consider them properly, in many cases convening a special council or finance committee meeting to discuss them in detail or indeed liaise with their principal council about the impact on joint working and onward devolution.
28. It was for these reasons I asked you to extend the consultation and I understand that while you have decided not to do that, there will be further consultation with parish and town councils following the publication of the draft local government settlement in December.
29. However I have very much appreciated your officials engaging with the sector through attending a national conference and two round table meetings which we organised with NALC's Larger Councils Committee and representatives from the 120 councils likely to be affected by the more limited scope of the proposals. I am also delighted you have accepted our invitation to be the keynote speaker at our conference for larger councils on 30 November which provides a further opportunity for you to explain the rationale and evidence for the proposals and hear directly from our councils.
30. Given the importance and significance of the proposals we have promoted the consultation extensively to parish and town councils and county associations through a dedicated consultation briefing, the website, weekly bulletins and our various social media channels. We have sought their views in order to inform our own response; this has included conducting a survey of the 120 councils, two roundtable meetings and a motion considered by NALC's annual general meeting where there was unanimous support from 120 county association delegates representing parish and town councils to oppose the proposals.
31. I am sure the government has undertaken a full Equality Impact Assessment of the proposals, and working with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs ensured they have been rural proofed; accordingly I would be grateful to receive a copy of these assessments.

32. **Impact of extending referendum principles to parish and town councils**
33. NALC does not agree that referendum principles should be extended to 120 larger, higher spending town and parish councils in 2017/18 and we resolutely oppose proposals to extend this further to include all 10,000 councils.
34. Parish and town councils provide cost effective, value for money local services and democratic community representation, are accountable to local people through the annual meeting, the parish poll mechanism and the ballot box and already communicate and involve local people in a number of ways about tax and spend decisions and service provision.
35. Unlike principal councils, local councils do not receive grant funding from central government or a share of business rates and are primarily financed through the parish precept. In addition parish and town councils do not generally benefit financially from development through a share of New Homes Bonus or Community Infrastructure Levy and there are limitations on their ability to generate income through trading using the general power of competence.

Case study thumbnail

Bodmin Town Council in Cornwall is leading on a project to provide a new 12 camera wireless town centre CCTV system with capital costs of around £90,000 to procure and install the equipment and revenue costs around £25,000 per year. The proposals would jeopardise this project as the requirement to undertake a referendum would cost around £25,000, a significant chunk of the capital cost to acquire equipment to assist the community with the detection and prevention of crime, fear of crime and to safeguard vulnerable people in our community. The 2% or £5 limit would also adversely affect the council's ability to cover the revenue costs to fund the system in the future.

Lewknor in Oxfordshire is planning to install a defibrillator costing £2000 which would now require a referendum and may not go ahead.

Withyham in East Sussex in its DCLG approved Our Place Plan will be setting up a "community workforce" to meet the challenge of austerity as the county councils budget drops £81m. A referendum could stop these plans which have already been subject to lengthy community consultation.

36. Your proposals will seriously damage the ability of communities to respond to current and future needs and priorities such as neighbourhood planning, protecting and enhancing local assets and services, as well as undermining local democracy and the vital community leadership role of parish and town councils.
37. Introducing these new rules would also seriously damage the ability of smaller communities to help themselves and very much threatens the government's previous commitments to localism and devolution.

Case Study thumbnail

Kirtlington Parish Council has a precept of £22,000 raised from 450 properties, with an average of 94p a week levied on each household. An increase in the precept of 3p to 97p per week in order to raise the precept by £700 to £22,700 (by 3%) would entail a referendum with an estimated cost of £800, thus to gain the required £700 the increase would have to be 7%.

38. The law of unintended consequences may also apply, rather than keeping council tax down and encouraging fiscal responsibility, the proposals may have the reverse effect and encourage parish and town councils to increase their precepts by £5 – not least to cover the costs of future referendums; this would result in an increase of 8.7% in parish and town council precept levels, far surpassing the 6.1% rise this year.

Case study thumbnail

Huntingdon Town Council in Cambridgeshire are planning to make significant investment into the community including providing a new cemetery (£3m), replacing existing Community Centre with a fit for purpose centre (£1.2m), providing sports facilities for their local sports clubs who have to use facilities 20 miles away (£2m) and developing a Neighbourhood Plan.

39. It is vital local councils continue to have the necessary freedom and flexibility to raise the resources they need to invest in local services, especially at a time when they are taking on services and assets from principal councils and other public service providers, often much valued services which would otherwise cease completely and which communities want to see continue and enhanced.

Case study thumbnail

West Knoyle Parish Council is a very small parish in Wiltshire where a £5 increase on last year's Band D precept would equate to £326.77, which wouldn't even pay for a few extra grass cuts on their playing field. A 2% increase would provide an overall increase of just £79.13, while the cost of the referendum in order to raise more money for projects would run into several hundred pounds.

40. As we have gathered information from councils including at our round table meetings I have been very concerned indeed to hear councillors and clerks tell us they would stand down if the proposals were implemented. Lack of support, faith and trust by government is one of their most commonly cited reasons.
41. The preparation of parish and town council budgets often starts in the summer with many councils agreeing the next year's budget and precept in the autumn hence I am concerned about the timescale for a final decision on these proposals and the knock on effects.

42. In order to support greater localism the clause in the Localism Act 2011 giving the secretary of state the power to set council tax referendum limits for public bodies including parish and town councils should be repealed. During a fringe event at the recent Conservative party conference in Birmingham you stated “I trust local councils”, therefore removing the government’s ability to interfere in tax and spend decisions by parish and town councils would be the ultimate test of this statement.
43. **Defining larger, higher spending parish and town councils**
44. In order to define larger, higher spending parish and town councils the government is proposing to use criteria comprising a Band D of £75.46 and precept income over £500,000.
45. This definition is not consistent with government’s other policies in relation to the criteria for larger parish and town councils, for example the local audit regime sets this criteria as budgeted income of £6.5m for three consecutive years.
46. The second fundamental flaw is the choice of £75.46 which is the level of Breckland District Council which has the lowest Band D council tax charged by a district council. There are only two district councils whose council tax is below £100.

Case study thumbnail

Ivybridge Town Council in Devon state many people in the electorate do not distinguish between the separate increases in council tax, for example the district council increased their council tax by the permitted 3.99% this year but the actual increase for a Band D property was £46.35, taking it to £1207.62. The Town Council would have to raise their share by 44% to generate the same amount of extra money per household.

47. It is important to recognize that Breckland District Council’s income from council tax is £6m, but with £56m coming from other sources meaning the Band D level is low due to income from other sources such as government grant, New Homes Bonus, assets such as land and buildings and a reduction in services. This has led to parish and town councils increasing their precept to deliver services not being provided by the district council. And of course the comparison is meaningless in unitary areas, especially Cornwall.
48. A more realistic comparator and level would be the average Band D council tax for district councils, which is currently £175.
49. **Referendum costs and turnout**
50. Referendums are an expensive and overly simplistic mechanism for involving and engaging local people in the complexity of the financing of local services.
51. Feedback from our councils tells us the average cost of a referendum will be around £10,000 or an additional £3 per Band D, with some larger councils with higher electorates expecting costs of up to £100,000.

52. These new costs will be an additional burden on council tax payers and result in already limited resources being diverted away from providing services and delivering projects which the community has already identified as a priority and values.

Case study thumbnail

Alnwick Town Council is a medium sized council in Northumberland and expects the cost of a referendum across its 3 wards to be around £10,000. This would equate to a 2% increase on their £500,000 precept purely to cover the costs of the referendum before any additional resources were raised for other services and projects.

53. At a time when the public purse is under such pressure as it is the Government seems to be proposing to use referenda as a means of ensuring that public money is wasted.
54. Using a wide range of tools and techniques, parish and town councils already consult and communicate with residents about their services and on tax on spending. NALC is keen to work with the government to promote good practice and examples such as Sevenoaks Town Council leaflet (attached) and Stone Parish Council's [budget infographic](#).

Case study thumbnail

The Kent Association of Local Councils state that the cost of developing a neighbourhood plan for one larger council in their area was £20,000. Neighbourhood plans have to be put to a referendum and should the cost of the project take the council above the 2% or £5 threshold another referendum would have to be held at a cost of around £20,000, thereby doubling the cost of the project.

55. Turnout in local referenda such as parish polls is very low and this is to be considered in combination with the excessive cost of holding expensive referenda in small parished rural areas where there would be little accountability with the result of any council tax increase referendum if the turnout was very low. Coupled with the fact that parish councillors are elected to make decisions and deliver services by and for residents – a referendum seems a counter-intuitive methodology to apply to gather public views on decisions residents have already asked councillors to make on their behalf.

Case Study thumbnails

Borough Green Parish Council in Kent held a parish poll in 2008 on the building of over 200 houses at Isles Quarry West and there was a turnout of just over 20%.

A recent parish poll on a community facility and local government structures in Bognor Regis cost the Town Council £20,000, while the turnout was less than 3%.

56. Referenda costs are also outside of the control of parish and town councils; this is one of several issues raised in our report on the 2015 Local Elections and sent to you which

calls for reform and modernisation of election rules, reviewing and tackling election costs and more and better information gathering.

57. Transfer of responsibilities to parish and town councils

58. As previously stated NALC is opposed to the extension of council referendum principles to parish and town councils. However we welcome the government's recognition that assets and services are being transferred from principal councils to parish and town councils and this is contributing to increases in costs by parish and town councils.

59. While the proposals seek to take such transfers into account the approach suggested is too narrow in scope. Instead this should be widened to include transfers of responsibility from other public services or a financial contribution to them (for example to fund Police Community Support Officers), the general growth in services provided by parish and town councils, situations where a principal council terminates a service and a parish or town council decides to provide the service in future without any agreement between the councils being in place, services formerly delivered by the principal council but where there has been no formal transfer or joint resolution by the councils that a service be transferred.

60. We do not agree with condition two which states that the parish or town council and the principal council should have agreed the reasonable cost of the exercise of that particular function in the parish council's area by the parish council in the financial year 2017/18. The level of investment by a parish or town council for that function is a matter for them and should not be subject to agreement with the principal council.

61. Communicating and engaging with local people

62. It is of paramount importance parish and town councils consider the concerns of local residents over their local area and the provision of good quality, cost effective services.

63. As stated previously, precepts have increased in some parish and town councils to provide services that have not only been devolved, but also those cut by principal councils but are still desired by local residents.

Case Study thumbnail

Farnham Royal Parish Council in South Buckinghamshire increased its precept from £75,000 five years ago to £120,750. Nevertheless feedback from residents is they are thrilled to see improvements to services that were previously cut back such as grass cutting and vegetation and have been happy to pay a bit more locally to see tangible results and an improved service.

64. However referenda are an expensive and overly simplistic mechanism for involving and engaging local people in the complexity of financing local services.

65. Parish and town councils already consult and communicate with residents in low costs ways to both gauge support for and then inform residents of proposed precept increases.

Case Study thumbnail

Amesbury Town Council currently informs residents of budget plans via its website, a quarterly newsletter delivered directly into people's homes via the local parish magazine and notice boards situated throughout the town particularly in residential areas. Last year's increase received just one query from the public.

66. Such tools and techniques include: online and print surveys; dedicated meetings, events and open days; councillor surgeries; use of local media including radio; door-to-door canvassing; adverts and articles in local papers; parish polls; the annual parish/town meeting of electors; websites and social media; participatory budgeting; stalls at community events; letters to all households.

Case study thumbnail

In 2016/17 Fleet Town Council in Hampshire raised the Band D by £4.81 to £60.44 per annum, the equivalent of 9p per week, per household. This was taken to redevelop 'The Harlington,' a community entertainment facility based in the town. The council consulted with residents on the proposals, holding an Annual Residents Meeting with over 200 residents in attendance, at which there was strong support for the redevelopment to go ahead.

67. The ultimate measure of local democratic accountability and resident satisfaction with tax and spend decisions is the ballot box every four years. However in addition parish and town councils already consult and communicate with residents in a variety of ways and instead of imposing costly referendums the government should work with NALC to promote good practice.
68. **Conclusions**
69. Ultimately we are all council tax payers and I share your desire to ensure that increases are not excessive, meet local needs and priorities and are informed by the views of residents.
70. I am very keen to continue to have a constructive dialogue with you about how we can achieve these objectives without introducing these proposals which will be hugely unpopular and discourage councillors from getting involved in precisely the kind of projects and activities I am sure you and the government would like them to be doing.
71. As Embsay with Eastby (Yorkshire) put it "as elected members of a Parish with a precept under £25,000, the view of councillors is that they did not stand for election to have their "vote in council" on the limited areas and levels of spend that come within their remit, overridden by use of a referendum. They believe this disenfranchising of

council members would be demoralizing and would bring into question why they volunteered to stand for the parish council in the first place.”

72. The proposals are of such importance and significance that it is important for other government departments to understand their impact on a range of parish and town council services and projects which they will no doubt have an interest in such as community transport, highway verges maintenance, library and cultural provision, crime prevention and community safety, youth projects and services, as well as the wider effects on thousands of rural communities. Accordingly I have therefore taken the opportunity to copy my response to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Transport and the Home Office.

Please do not hesitate to contact either me directly or my officers if there is anything you would like to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ken D Browse'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

COUNCILLOR KEN BROWSE
CHAIRMAN

What does the Town Council need the budget for?

Sevenoaks Town Council has made public its ambitious **£4m Community Investment Plan to provide new community facilities including a Bat & Ball Centre, new sports and play facilities, continued investment in the Stag, Bat & Ball Station building and the exterior of the iconic Vine Pavilion .**

The Town Council is in the process of disposing of assets to pay for this plan. This is a lengthy process and capital receipts have not been received to date.

Sevenoaks Town Council is also committed to ensuring that current community facilities are refurbished and maintained for future generations in particular the Vine Pavilion and ensure that community funding for voluntary groups who do so much for Sevenoaks is not reduced.

In setting the 2016/17 Budget and Precept the Town Council is mindful of the financial resources required to meet the ambitions of the Community Investment Plan. For this reason a larger than normal contingency figure has been included in the annual budget. The Town Council also needs to make a financial adjustment to address the loss of rental from properties that have been sold.

Where does Sevenoaks Town Council get its money from?

The Town Council's income is generated from:-

1. The Precept paid for by Sevenoaks local ratepayers
2. Income generating activities e.g. community halls, sports pitches, markets, cemetery, Café on the Vine.
3. Service Level Agreements – providing services for other organisations.
4. Rents and leases
5. Obtaining external grants – for Capital Investment
6. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – for Capital Investment.
7. Disposal of Assets – for Capital Investment

Sevenoaks Town Council does not receive any portion of the Business Rates and no longer receives a portion of the Government Support Grant (previously £36,000).

With the exception of public open spaces that do not generate income Sevenoaks Town Council aims to provide facilities that are at least cost neutral and is moving more towards operating income generating facilities e.g. Café on the Vine and the markets.

Sevenoaks Town Council's budget for the Financial Year 2016 – 2017 is proposed to be £1,391,000. The Town Council generates income and grants which total to approximately 30% and the remainder is charged to the Precept which is paid by local council tax payers. The average Band D house in Sevenoaks will pay almost £106 per year or approximately £2 per week.

How will the budget be spent?

The Town Council's budget is spent under the following main categories:-

Function	Expenditure	Income	Net cost	%
Council Admin	382	0	382	39
Public Open Space	263	34	229	24
Planning	31	0	31	3
Community Centre	55	63	-8 (profit)	-1
Council Offices	40	14	26	3
Community Events	43	19	24	2
Youth Café / services	51	44	7	1
IT	22	0	22	2
Democracy costs	19	0	19	2
Professional Fees	16	0	16	2
Grants to Local organisations	73	0	73	7
Cemetery	89	70	19	2
Neighbourhood Dev. Plan	6	6	0	0
Vine Gardens / Café	107	99	8	1
Insurance	25	0	25	3
Markets	56	61	-5 (profit)	-1
Contingency	113	0	113	12
Interest	0	8	-8 (profit)	-1
	1391	418	973	100

Please forward any queries or comments you have on this information to Linda Larter, Town Clerk via townclerk@sevenoakstown.gov.uk or write to Sevenoaks Town Council at the address below.

Sevenoaks Town Council, Council Offices, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3QG

Functions and Facilities provided by Sevenoaks Town Council

Allotments	Neighbourhood Development Plan
Bandstand concerts	No. 8 Bus
Bat & Ball Station building (2016)	Planters
Bethal Road Burial Ground	Pontoise Close Open Space & Playground
Brittains Common	Public Seats
Brittains Lane Wood	Public Toilets
Buckhurst Lane Play Area (2016)	Raleys Car Park
Bus Shelters	Raleys & Knole Paddock
Christmas Lights	Rheinbach Gardens
Civic Functions	Sevenoaks Common
Community Events	Sevenoaks Community Centre
Consultees (Planning, Highways etc)	Sevenoaks Town Partnership
Grants to Local Organisations	Stag Community Arts Centre
Greatness Park Cemetery	Street lights in unadopted road
Greatness Park Recreation Ground & Play Area	The Pound
Hanging Baskets	Town Council Offices / Chamber
Hillingdon Rise Play Area	Twinning with Rheinbach & Pontoise
Horse Troughs	Upper High St Gardens
HitB – House in the Basement Youth Café	Vine Gardens (including public toilets)
The Green, Hillingdon Rise	Vine Cricket Ground & Pavilion
Jubilee Clock (Old Market House)	Café on the Vine
Judd's Piece	Vine Waste
Julian's Meadow & Playground	Vintage Bus
Kippington Meadow	War Memorial
Land at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter Box Lane • Littlewood • Tonbridge Road 	White Hart Beeches
Litter Bins	Woodside Road Open Space
Sports Pitches	Youth Council
Markets	
Middlings Wood	
Millpond Wood	
Mount Close Open Space	