



SPECIAL BRAMLEY UPDATE

8th January 2020

Bramley Parish Council - Funding

Bramley Parish Council provides a range of services to residents, some of which are set out in Box 1 below. Delivery of these services is funded from a slice of the Council Tax called the “precept”. In 2019, total Waverley Council Tax for a Band D house in Bramley was £1,921, and the Parish Council’s slice was £25.14 (1.3%). For years, Bramley has had a low precept in comparison to Waverley’s other 20 towns and parishes: in 2019 we had the second lowest (see Figure 1 below). We have kept the precept low by being careful about expenditure, being alert to and maximising income from various national and local grant schemes, and using income from assets managed by the Parish Council (mainly the Village Hall). This has enabled us to keep increases in our precept in recent years to either flat or inflation.

- Maintenance and management of Bramley Village Hall.
- Management of Gosden Common including grass cutting.
- Provision and maintenance of the Eastwood Rd play area.
- Maintenance of the War Memorial, the Church Pound, the Goose Pound, the Churchyard walls, the Stone Barn, and the level crossing and old station fixtures on Station Road.
- Provision of village notice boards.
- Coordination of Bramley Community Library.
- Trustees to Smith’s Charity.
- Village voice on planning applications.
- Twice yearly clean and cut back of Downs Link through the village.

Box 1 Some of the activities carried out by Bramley Parish Council

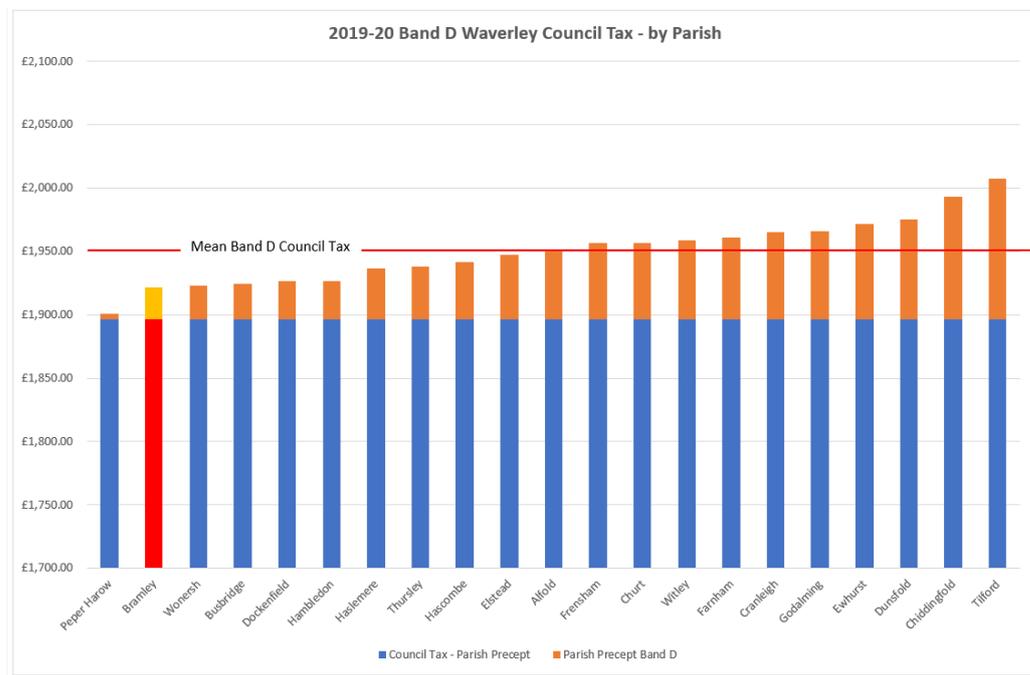


Figure 1 Council taxes and precepts in Waverley, by Parish

In recent years, funding shortages at Surrey County and Waverley Borough Councils have necessitated the Parish Council taking on more services. For example, the amount of groundskeeping we have to do to maintain verges, public spaces and paths such as the Downs Link has increased significantly; the level of administration we need to undertake has increased. The Parish Council has been able to manage this by calling on our reserves and shrinking our expenditure on projects that we wanted to do for the community but felt we could not.

Our reserves are £60,000 which sounds significant. But the Parish Council has to maintain £1,100,000 worth of often aging, and sometimes listed, assets such as the Village Hall. We cannot obtain insurance against wear and tear on these assets, so we need cash reserves to fund the maintenance.

In 2019 we faced a financial challenge: the Stone Barn (beside the Village Hall) is a locally listed old building that has been used as storage for years. It needs a new roof costing about £20,000. The Council considers that to spend £20,000 on what is currently no more than a basic storage facility would not have been an appropriate use of your money. So we are embarking on a project to convert the Stone Barn to office space for rent. This will create another revenue generating asset, rather than a worrying cost sink and it will provide useful additional office space in the village.

The combination of additional costs and our Stone Barn project means that for 2020 the Council believes it needs to rebase its finances. So, we plan to take further money from our reserves to reduce them to £47,500, while at the same time making a significant increase in our precept.

For 2020, your councillors believe we need to increase in the precept for a Band D house from £25.14 per year to £34.80 per year. In percentage terms this sounds large at 38%, but in absolute terms the increase equates to 19p per week and will bring the Parish Council an extra £17,758 which will allow us to fund projects and services we believe necessary for the community. Even after this increase Bramley's precept will remain in the lower quartile amongst Waverley town and parish councils.

The Parish Council has been proud of being able to operate with the lowest precept of any Parish other than Peper Harrow. However, we are one of the largest Parishes in Waverley and have more costs than many because of the extent of the public land we manage, and the assets such as the Village Hall and Gosden Common Pavilion that we need to maintain.

We realise that any increase in tax is undesirable. But we hope that our explanation justifies why. As this is a rebasing exercise, we anticipate that this higher level will remain in future years, but any subsequent increases should drop to the level of inflation. If we are able to reduce the precept in the future, we will do so.

You may be aware that County and District or Borough Councils that increase their Council Tax by more than 2% a year have to call a referendum. This does not apply to Parish Councils because the absolute sums involved are so much smaller and so a large percentage increase can represent a comparatively small absolute amount of money.

If you have any questions about this then you can attend any Parish Council meeting (these are publicised through Bramley Update) or visit the Parish Council office on Tuesday or Thursday mornings between 9am and 12pm. Alternatively, you can email us on bramleyparish@gmail.com or post on Facebook's Bramley Update group and we will respond there.

We want to be transparent about our finances so, we are explaining this well in advance of the bills arriving. The new level of Council Tax will be effective from April 2020 and will be communicated by Waverley Borough Council in their Council Tax communication.

Yours sincerely

Bramley Parish Council

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