

## **Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council**

This month your parish council is getting ready to bid a fond farewell to one parish councillor, but also to welcome another. More on this in the next issue.

**Flood bund.** Parish Councillors were sorry and upset to hear two days before Christmas that the project to protect the communities of Severn Stoke, Clifton, Sandford and Sheepcote Lane is again on hold. At the time of writing 16/01/26 the Parish Council and residents still have not received official confirmation or notification on this matter. We hope that matters will progress quickly and we are seeking clarification from all parties. As soon as we know more, we will directly inform those residents most affected first and then place an update on our website and on social media. Our website has an option for residents to sign up to receive notification of news and press releases. <https://severnstokeandcroomedabitot-pc.gov.uk/>

**Budget for 2026/27. The Precept Explained** Councils across the UK are facing severe funding pressure and budget shortfalls and they no longer make regular funding contributions to parish councils. To address this your Parish Council has been debating an increase in the local Precept.

**What is a Precept?** The Precept is the main source of income for most parish councils as they do not receive direct funding from Central Government. It is a small part of each household's council tax payment and helps fund the parish council's operations and services. In addition, parish councils seek grant funding for some projects.

**What does a Parish Council provide?** Here are some of the key activities/outgoings:

- Maintenance, insurance and public liability for parish council land and assets, including the war memorial, street lighting, litter bins (which accept mixed waste and dog waste), heritage phone booths, bus shelters, community noticeboards, seats and benches. In 2025/26, insurance was £700 pa, expected to rise in the coming year.
- Membership in the Lengthsman Scheme, contributing to the hire of a contractor for roadside maintenance across the parish, maintaining and installing signage, keeping visibility splays clear, clearing drain tops and gullies etc, assisting landowners who are maintaining their roadside ditches, reporting flytipping and liaising with the parish clerk as to any issue parish wide.
- Provision and maintenance of speed VAS signs across the parish.
- Contribution to the maintenance of Public Rights of Way and related infrastructure.
- Statutory consultee on planning applications and a local voice on highways and environmental matters.
- Representing residents' views to higher-tier councils (like district or county councils) and other organisations.

**How is the Precept raised?** Worcestershire Council collects your Council Tax on behalf of themselves, Police, Fire, Adult Social Care, and the Parish Councils in their district.

**How is it calculated?** Each January, your Parish Council sets the Precept for the next financial year by considering projected income, grants, and expenses. The Precept is the amount needed to balance the budget and deliver services. This year, your Parish Council is accounting for potential additional services due to the upcoming process of Devolution (the merging of County and District Councils 2027/2028).

**How much does the average household pay for the Precept?** The average Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot household's Precept for 2025-26 was £46 per year, costing a Band D household £0.88 per week. Parish Councillors are considering increasing this. The final amount depends on the number of contributing households. Increases are never welcome but we take the following points into consideration:

- **Risk of Devolution Outcomes:** Parish Councils may need to cover costs for services previously paid for by the County and District Councils. These include a much larger contribution towards the Lengthsman Scheme, wider responsibility for gully cleaning, hedge cutting, ditch clearing and mowing roadside verges (which includes taking responsibility for roadside bio-diversity and general maintenance).
- **Loss of Grant Funding:** Parish Councils may no longer receive grants from County and District Councillor Divisional Funding which can amount to £500-£600 or more annually.
- **Inflationary pressure:** Rising cost of labour and raw materials, are impacting our capital spending and maintenance work.
- **Need for Protected Funds:** There is a need to build up protected funds for unforeseen repairs, renewals and any required legal processes.
- **Parish Clerk Availability:** The Parish Clerk is available 24/7 for emergencies and helps ensure that resident voices are heard.

**Overall,** the Parish Council believes a prudent increase is necessary given the current economic climate. Conscientious monitoring of income and expenditure has allowed the Parish Council to maintain a stable annual financial base of around £20,000 which is used to deliver community services and projects. If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact the Clerk: Mrs Lisa Stevens [parishclerk@grimley-pc.gov.uk](mailto:parishclerk@grimley-pc.gov.uk) [parishclerk@severnstokeandcroomedabitot-pc.gov.uk](mailto:parishclerk@severnstokeandcroomedabitot-pc.gov.uk) 07950256363 / 01905 820956