

Taunton Parish Budget and Council Tax Implications 2023/24

1 2023/24 Budget Summary

- 1.1 The following table provides a summary of the proposed Taunton parish/town council budget for 2023/24.
- 1.2 The Budget for the first year of the new Council is required to be set by Somerset Council in October, as part of the Order, as the prospective Billing Authority for the area in which the new parish exists.
- 1.3 The Budget draws together cost estimates for services that are to be transferred which are currently provided by the district council (SWTC) and the affected neighbouring parish councils, special expenses for the current unparished area of Taunton, the Taunton Charter Trustees, and core running costs of a brand new local council.
- 1.4 The proposed budget also includes additional funding in a Service Growth and Improvements budget to provide the new council with spending power for betterment of local services and the town environment reflecting the determination of the CGR Working Group that the new Council will make an impact with improvements for Taunton.

Table – 2023/24 Proposed Budget

Description	2023/24 Proposed Budget £000	2022/23 Existing Costs				2023/24 New Costs £000
		Charter Trustees £000	Special Expenses £000	Parish Budgets £000	SWTC Budget £000	
Income						
Allotments	-6				-6	
Asset Management	-11				-10	-1
Parks	-12				-11	
Events	-10				-10	
Total Income	-38	0	0	0	-37	-1
Expenditure						
Town Council staffing and admin	275	41	0	44	0	189
Allotments	8	0	0	0	8	0
Handyman services: amenities and play areas	52	0	0	21	0	31
Parks	563	0	0	0	509	55
Public Conveniences	106	0	0	0	99	7
Community and Events	101	0	0	1	100	0
Grants	75	0	29	1	0	44
Local Democracy	17	17	0	0	0	0
Council offices	34	0	0	0	0	34
Service Growth and Improvement	400	0	0	0	0	400
General Contingency	100	0	0	4	0	96
Total Expenditure	1,732	59	29	71	716	857
Contribution To Reserve	420					420
COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT	2,114	59	29	71	678	1,276

2 Key Budget Items

Charter Trustee and Civic items

- 2.1 The Taunton Charter Trustees precept in 2022/23 is £58,726. This amount is charged to the households in the current Taunton unparished area which has a 2022/23 Tax Base of 15,255.85 Band D Equivalents and a Band D charge of £3.85 per year. This budget provides for the mayor, civic support and administration, civic events, civic regalia and chattels, and democratic costs. These costs have been taken into account when preparing the budget estimates for the new parish/town council, with no separate precept for Charter Trustees due in 2023/24.

Unparished Area Special Expenses

- 2.2 Somerset West and Taunton Council raises council tax in the form of special expenses to provide for costs incurred where there is no parish council in Taunton. The special expenses rate precept in 2022/23 is £29,458. This amount is charged to the households in the current Taunton unparished area which has a 2022/23 Tax Base of 15,255.85 Band D Equivalents and a Band D charge of £1.93 per year.

Allotments

- 2.3 Allotments are required by regulation to be transferred to the new parish/town council. The budget reflects the current costs of maintenance and income received resulting in a small net cost to the council. The allotments currently owned by SWTC included are:

- Whitmore Allotments
- Galmington Road Allotments
- Hamilton Road Allotments
- Rowbarton Allotments
- Priorswood Allotments
- Higher Holway Allotments
- Turners Allotments
- Stoke Road Allotments

- 2.4 All these allotments are leased with local management arrangements in place. The freehold will transfer to the town parish/town which will then become the lessee.

Parks

- 2.5 The CGR Member Working Group proposes that the following parks and amenities at these locations are transferred to be the responsibility of the new Taunton parish/town council from 1 April 2023.

- Victoria Park (including pavilion and public conveniences)
- French Weir Park
- Galmington Park (including pavilion)
- Greenway Recreation Ground
- Hamilton Gault Park (including pavilion and public conveniences)
- Hawthorn Park
- Lyngford Park
- Priorswood Park
- Taunton Green (including pavilion)
- Goodlands Gardens (including café)
- Comeytrowe Park

- 2.6 Cost and income estimates have been prepared for amounts included in the SWTC budget in 2022/23 for these services/assets and an estimate of the projected costs for 2023/24. These estimates are set to cover a wide range of service delivery

relevant to each location for example grounds maintenance, play equipment maintenance and inspection, other compliance activity, pitch marking, hired use, tree maintenance, utilities, business rates, and so on.

2.7 Actual costs are not easily disaggregated for example when work is undertaken through a contract for service covering more than the above. The presumption at this stage is that the parish/town council will buy the service from the unitary from the outset. This may be reviewed later for example when current contracts end.

2.8 Included in the transfer of Parks are all services and responsibilities that occur within the boundary of the facility. These differ from site to site but include responsibilities such as:

- Grass Cutting
- Tree inspection and maintenance
- Planting and shrub maintenance
- Play area provision, replacement, inspection, and maintenance
- Sports pitch markings and bookings
- Benches and street furniture
- Litter and dog bin provision, replacement and emptying
- Litter picking, fly tip waste removal, glass, needles etc.
- All buildings and structures
- Compliance responsibilities, legionella, gas safe, electrical
- Utilities costs
- Public liability insurance
- Stream / watercourse maintenance
- Third party leases
- Trustee responsibilities

Public Conveniences

2.9 The budget reflects the operating costs (cleaning, locking/unlocking, consumables) of the following public conveniences in Taunton:

- Castle Green (town centre)
- Cannon Street (in car park)
- Victoria Street (in the park pavilion)
- Vivary Park (in the park café building)
- Hamilton Gault (in the park pavilion)
- French Weir (in the COACH building)
- Priorswood Place (in shops buildings)

2.10 The budget reflects the running costs of the service. It is anticipated the assets currently in SWTC ownership will transfer on either a freehold or leasehold basis as appropriate to each property one or after Vesting Day.

2.11 Actual costs are not easily disaggregated for example when work is undertaken through a contract for service covering more than the above. The presumption at this stage is that the parish/town council will buy the service from the unitary from the outset. This may be reviewed later for example when the current SWT contracts end.

2.12 Included in the transfer of Public Toilets are all services and responsibilities that occur within the boundary of the facility, including responsibilities such as:

- All building related costs, maintenance, and capital works
- Compliance responsibilities, legionella, gas safe, electrical
- Utilities costs

- Public liability insurance
- Waste removal, needles etc.
- All cleaning costs and consumables

Events, Grants and Other Costs

- 2.13 The district council currently holds an events budget which funds activities such as Christmas events, Christmas lights, bunting/banners, Jubilee and similar celebrations etc. Most of the funding is incurred delivering events in Taunton therefore a proportion of the budget is proposed to transfer £100,000 to the Town Council. The staffing budget includes a provision for staff to organise events in the town.

Parishes

- 2.14 The amount of Parish precept that is budgeted to transfer to Taunton from Comeytrove, Staplegrove, Cheddon Fitzpaine & Trull is the pro-rata amount relating to the Band D equivalents transferring into Taunton. The presumption is assets will transfer reflecting boundary changes and the budget assumes existing services and facilities delivered in the transferred locations will continue.
- 2.15 The parish budgets cover the salary cost of the Clerks, annual memberships, election costs, administration and parish related maintenance costs. Generally the maintenance costs cover areas such as footpaths, church yards and play areas, and more specific assets being Penny's Field in Comeytrove and The Grove in Staplegrove.

3 Indicative Council Tax Rate for the New Taunton Parish

- 3.1 The Band D Council Tax rate for the new Taunton parish will not be determined until the 2023/24 Council Tax Base is calculated and approved in December 2022.
- 3.2 An indicative tax base has been modelled in May 2022 based on council tax register data held at the time, reflecting the properties that would be in the new parish boundary assuming the boundary as set out in the stage 2 consultation is adopted. The final tax base will be based on the adopted boundary for the new parish per the Order.
- 3.3 The indicative Tax Base for 2023/24 is 22,500 Band D Equivalents. In this scenario an **indicative amount** for the Band D Council Tax Rate based on the proposed budget and precept of £2.1m would be **approximately £94 per year**. The following table shows how this would be applied across the council tax bands for this **indicative amount**.

Band D Equivalent Factors	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9
Council Tax Band	A (dis)	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Indicative Charge per Band	£53	£63	£73	£84	£94	£115	£135	£157	£188

- 3.4 It is important to emphasise these are **indicative amounts only** and the final Council Tax charge per Band for 2023/24 Council Tax Billing will **almost certainly be different** when calculated in December 2022.

4 Council Tax Comparisons

- 4.1 The Council Tax charges will change for affected households in the current unparished area and the households that become part of Taunton Parish when the boundaries change on 1 April 2023.
- 4.2 Neighbouring parish councils as reflected in updated boundaries will still be responsible for setting their own precept for 2023/24.
- 4.3 As a guide the following table provides a summary of 2022/23 Precepts for Taunton and the neighbouring parishes whose boundaries are set to change through the proposed Order. This provides a comparison with the indicative tax rate for the new Taunton parish based on the proposed budget and indicative tax base for 2023/24.

	2022/23 Tax Base Band D Equivalent	2022/23 Precept £	2022/23 Band D Rate £	Indicative 2023/24 Tax Base £	Indicative 2023/24 Precept £	Indicative 2023/24 Band D £
Taunton unparished (special expenses + charter trustees)	15,255.85	88,184	5.78	Households in these areas that are within the new Taunton parish boundary from April 2023 will be charged the Band D rate for the new parish/town council.		
Cheddon Fitzpaine	909.06	37,247	40.97			
Comeytrove	1,990.73	24,000	12.06			
Staplegrove	788.77	12,910	16.37			
Trull	1,087.58	31,000	28.50			
Taunton Parish Indicative			N/A	22,500	2,114,040	94

5 Council Tax Adjustment – Alternative Notional Amount (ANA)

- 5.1 As part of the wider Local Government Review (LGR) in Somerset an exercise will be undertaken to harmonise the Band D tax rates, which restates the 2022/23 tax rates to set a new baseline comparative figure for 2022/23 as if the unitary council was already in place. This is called an Alternative Notional Amount (ANA) and is subject to Secretary of State approval. The ANA combines the tax precepts raised by the County Council and the four district councils in 2022/23 to create an average Band D rate for the whole tax base for Somerset. Future tax increases are measured against this adjusted baseline.
- 5.2 In addition to the harmonisation adjustment for LGR the ANA will also need to reflect an adjustment for the costs and budget transferred in respect of district services currently included in the SWTC precept. This has the effect of reducing the district and thus unitary council's council tax precept baseline by the same amount of budget that is removed for transferred costs. This will include the removal of special expenses (2022/23 = £29,458) and transferred district service costs (2022/23 = £678,440).
- 5.3 The total reduction included in the ANA for district/unitary council tax precept is therefore £707,898, which divided by the Somerset 2022/23 Tax Base of 200,747.16 band D equivalents = £3.52.
- 5.4 The proposed ANA needs to be submitted to DLUHC by 7 October 2022 by the SCC S151 Officer and is expected to be confirmed with the Finance Settlement in December 2022.