

Clerk notes – Budget 2025/26:

1. Employment -

a) Salary - based on spinal point 28 (£37,938 FT / 37hrs x 20 hrs = £20,507.20 increased by 4% = £21,327.49

b) NI - the government is increasing the rate of employer NI from 13.8% to 15% and reducing the per-employee threshold at which employers become liable to pay NI from 6 April 2025 to £5000. The Govt has yet to clarify whether councils will be protected from increases to NI. NI is calculated at 15% for the purposes of this budget.

2. Administration -

a) Office rent- heating costs have been included for 9 months of the year @ £80pcm = £720pa - now removed

b) Insurance - contract ends in September 2025, increased by 25% to reflect market conditions

3. Environment -

a) Seats - the Clerk and groundsman will carry out an asset inspection over the winter to clarify the state of assets and need for replacement, focussing on bins/planters/bus shelters/seats. The Clerk will provide a brief report in the spring.

b) Tree inspections - this reflects the proposed fees of £1300 plus OTISS costs although there will likely be a cost saving on reports after the 2024/25 report due to a reduction in time spent populating the OTISS database and a possible reduction in the frequency of inspection of some low risk trees.

NOTE - there appears to be no budget for tree works - assume these were previously paid from sports fields and play areas maintenance headings

c) VATCS maintenance - as the signs are now out of contract, the Council has indicated that it would not seek to repair any faulty signs in future and may look to full replacement on a value for money basis. It may therefore be appropriate to remove this line from the budget

d) Climate change - this heading previously had no budget allocated. Either a budget should be allocated or the heading removed for 2025/26.

4. Communications -

a) Printing and design based on 2 x 16 page editions. Design costs may be less for future editions (first edition costing £500)

5. Sports Fields -

a) Sports Fields Initiatives - FA Pitchpower grant requires match funding - from reserves?

b) MUGA maintenance - is any planned?

6. Play Facilities -

a) Play Areas Future Fund - much of the play equipment in both play areas is at its maximum lifespan, as is the BEPA wet pour. A management plan should be implemented to establish possible future replacement costs and funding in the mid to long term.

Reserves - as at 31.08.24, the Unity reserve account held £11304.25 and the Nationwide account held £74092.20. However funds from previous years remain in the Unity current account which, as at 31.03.24, were around £36,000. This gives an overall reserve of £121,020 rather than £85,020 when the current account is not considered.

The increased costs are partly due to inflation generally and projected increase in insurance costs. However there is a substantial increase attributable to the cost of tree works which was not accounted for in the current year's budget and for repair/replacement works to the planters at Branch End and Birches Nook and seat repairs. These replacements may be paid for from reserves in order to reduce the overall increase.