

What is a Precept?

The Precept is a tax that Parish Councils charge their local electors to meet their budget requirements. Parish Councils do not receive any direct funding from central government and rely on their Precept plus any other income they generate from services or facilities they provide. The Parish Council Precept is part of the Council Tax and is collected from local electors via their Council Tax payments.

How is it Calculated?

The Precept requirement is the difference between the Parish Council's estimated income and its anticipated spending requirements for the financial year (its budget). The financial year runs from 1st April to 31st March. The Parish Council needs to agree a budget before it can set its Precept and both must be agreed by the full Parish Council.

When calculating the Precept, the Parish Council takes into consideration:

- current year's spending levels - for ongoing services for which it is responsible e.g. recreation facilities, lighting, cemeteries, insurance and cost of the Parish Office
- costs of any additional spending plans or projects
- provision for contingencies and reserves
- levels of anticipated income – from services for which it is responsible e.g., rental income, burial fees, grants

Currently there is no cap on the amount that Parish Councils can raise via their precept (District Councils and County Councils are capped). This is under consideration but for now Central Government expects Parish Councils to demonstrate restraint. They should be able to explain and justify larger precept increases.

Once a Precept has been approved by Wool Parish Council, it informs Dorset Council and it is then added to residents Council Tax bills. Dorset Council pay the Precept to Wool Parish Council in two instalments (Apr and Sept).

Tax base and Band D equivalent.

Part of the Precept Calculation is the 'Band D equivalent'. Band D is the middle band of Council Tax and is supposed to represent the amount of Council Tax paid on an average property in the area. The Band D equivalent provides a measure which allows precepts among councils of different sizes to be compared. The estimated number of Band D equivalent properties in the tax base is supposed to be notified to Wool Parish Council by Dorset Council prior to the Precept setting exercise (however this rarely happens in practice, it is usually in January just before the deadline for applying). The required Precept is divided by the number of houses in the tax base to get the Band D equivalent