

# Westfield Parish Council

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Chairman: Cllr G Fuller Parish Clerk: Ms L J Close FSLCC

## Precept Explanation Leaflet 2022/23

The purpose of this leaflet is to set out the main areas of the Parish Council's work and to highlight where the public money is spent within the parish.

The precept is the levy raised by the Parish Council to fund its planned expenditure for the year. The Council deliberated hard over funding its budget in this exceptional year. Many families are struggling financially as a result of the continuing challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic and the Council wanted to strike the balance between easing the tax burden for the uncertain year ahead and protecting its reserves in the face of future financial burdens which would avoid steep tax rises in future.

Conscientious monitoring of income and expenditure over the years has enabled Westfield Parish Council to create a stable financial base, from which to deliver projects for the community.

We are aware that our unitary authority, Bath and North East Somerset Council, has faced some severe challenges to its

finances over recent years. This has and will continue to impact the services in Westfield and with continued careful control of its finances the Parish Council can continue to support and mitigate this impact as much as possible.

### What services does the Parish Council offer?

- We are a statutory consultee on **planning applications** and provides a local voice on **highways** and **environmental matters**.
- We have a **Neighbourhood Plan** which directs future developments in the Parish ensuring the standards of development as well as affording the Parish a 25% portion of the community infrastructure levy which it uses to fund projects for the benefit of Westfield.
- We fund **youth services** in the Parish.
- We manage **sports and leisure facilities** at Norton Hill and Westhill Recreation Grounds on behalf of two Miners' Welfare Trusts.
- Our **recreation ground facilities** offer football pitches, a tennis court, play areas, a BMX track, gym equipment, a fitness track, table tennis, boules and basketball.
- Public open space at **Waterside Valley** is a new feature this year and we are committed to managing this land for its bio diversity and accessibility.



- We encourage **community spirit** by funding events such as the Christmas Lights Switch-on, the summer Fun Day, the Front Garden competition and the Inspirational Citizen award. New in 2021 was the award for the best residential Christmas decorations.
- We support the **parish environment** by funding the hanging baskets and the planting schemes in the decorative pit trucks and raised beds around the parish, as well as additions to the parish such as the Heritage Walking trails and campaigning to keep footpaths clear.
- We support **local organisations** through grant funding and make provision in our budget to **support St Nicholas Churchyard** which is used and appreciated by many residents of Westfield.
- In partnership with community organisations, we provide and maintain six **public access defibrillators** in the parish.

### How did the Parish Council perform in the last year?

The purchase of land at **Waterside Valley**, to be held in perpetuity as public open space, is a landmark moment in the history of the parish. Funded with s.106 funds the public consultation beforehand was the strongest yet in terms of numbers of people responding and the strength of feeling that this land should be bought. Grateful thanks to Somer Valley Rediscovered for funding a bio diversity



survey of the site which will help shape the Management Plan going forward.

**New play equipment** is to be installed at both Norton Hill and Westhill Play areas this year, due to existing equipment reaching end of life. This includes the trim trail and basket swing at Westhill and the climber at Norton Hill.

It was sad to see the demise of **14 Ash trees** lining the A367 at Norton Hill Recreation Ground due to Ash die back. These have been replaced with Silver Birch saplings.

After the cancellation of the **Christmas Lights Switch On** in 2020, it was great to see the return of this event in 2021, supported by more people than ever before.

Mindful of the importance of the Westfield Methodist Church and Hall to the community, the Parish Council had it registered as **an asset of community value**. This means that if the church had to sell the property, the Parish Council would have a specified window of time to look at purchasing it for the community.

**Youth Services** continued despite a number of challenges. The Parish Council was pleased to continue to support the provision financially.

We continued to support local organisations with **grant donations**, including Citizens Advice Bureau, Mardons Carnival Club, MSN and Radstock Silver Band, St Peter's Church, Westfield Allotment and Garden Society and Westfield Voices.



**The Westfield Heritage Trails** were revisited with some slight changes to the routes and new information boards installed. Why not take a look at them on the Parish Council's website – [www.westfieldparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.westfieldparishcouncil.co.uk)



The fourth annual **Inspirational Citizen Award** was awarded to three people this year: Debbie Maggs spent time organising events within her street for residents to socialise – barbeque, coffee morning and even a fish and chip supper. Nigel Swift has spent several years making sure the pathways through a section of the Waterside Valley are passable and he mows them regularly. He has also cleared vegetation from a length of the river, keeping it all in check and healthy. Mike Chivers is seen almost on a daily basis in Westfield in his high viz jacket with bags to collect litter that has thoughtlessly been discarded. Mike actually invents and makes equipment that he can use to get to litter that has been swept into bushes and brambles. He leaves nothing behind. All three are truly inspirational.

The annual **Front Garden competition** was won by Mr Keith Dalley of Longfellow Road for his diverse, attractive front garden. He said how lovely it is to hear people walking past and commenting on the lovely flowers in his garden. It adds to the enjoyment of planning the garden and makes the hard work worthwhile! Mrs Jade Kerton of Waterford Park won the

container prize for two beautiful hanging baskets. She was very touched to have been nominated for the award and happy that her beautiful hanging baskets had given pleasure to passers-by. Judged by our very own flowers contractor, the prizes were generously donated by Thomsons Hardware in Radstock.

The new **Christmas Decorations** award went to Mr Kevin Rabbitts of Ruskin Road who was really made up to have won something and said that he just wanted to cheer people up and put a smile on their faces. Well, he did just that!

This year we continued to use our quarterly newsletter, **The Westfield Warbler**, to offer a free advert in the Business Directory to any business based in and serving Westfield.

**Website accessibility** is ever more important as we rely on the internet for communication. 2021 saw our new website go live and it is good to see that it meets the new accessibility standards for local councils.

**Winter maintenance** of the pavements is as important as ever and our heartfelt thanks to the unsung heroes who voluntarily go out in the severest of weather to grit some of the pavements in the parish. Thank you for looking after our community. If you can join this lovely group of people and give a few hours in the cold weather, please contact the Parish Council office – [council@westfieldparishcouncil.co.uk](mailto:council@westfieldparishcouncil.co.uk)



## What is new for 2022/23

**A Management Plan for Waterside Valley** is a key element of work in 2022/23 to see the land managed effectively. A public consultation is a vital part of the process.

The **Climate Emergency Working Group** welcomes any new members who have an interest in this area and would like to share ideas or get involved. You do not have to be on the Parish Council to join the working group. This year the Working Group liaised with Shell Garage for the installation of an electric charging point, looked at grants available for community tree planting for a community orchard at Waterside Valley and started investigating low carbon heat sources for the community.

We continue to budget cautiously and to ensure we have contingency reserves to maintain a healthy financial balance of providing for the community whilst anticipating future demands on its resources. We positively encourage your views and suggestions for the future of our Parish. Residents are welcome to attend meetings of the Parish Council and you can view our 2022/23 budget at any time on our [website](#).

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How is the Parish Council funded?

The Parish Council raises a precept based on its budgeted spending for the year. The precept is added to your Council Tax bill and is shown alongside other additions such as Police & Fire and Social Care. In addition to the precept the Council seeks funding in the form of grants for some of its projects. We also receive Community Infrastructure payments.

### How much does the average household pay towards the Parish Council?

The precept total is apportioned per household according to Council Tax band and is presented in terms of a Band D equivalent. The 2022-23 precept of £218,590 will cost a band D household £114.71 per year or £2.21 per week. This is an increase of 10p per week from last year.

### How is the Parish Council run?

The Parish Council is made up of 11 Councillors elected by the people of Westfield every four years. The Parish Council employs three part time members of staff to administer the work of the Council. Details of the Councillors and contact details for the office can be found on our website and in the back of each edition of our quarterly newsletter, The Westfield Warbler.

The Parish Council is governed by statute, such as the Localism Act 2011. We are members of the National Association of Local Council (NALC) who advise on updates to the law and changes in legislation such as GDPR and website accessibility.

