

Didcot Town Council

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Guide to the Town Council element of your council tax for the year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

In 2023/2024 Didcot Town Council will receive £123.68 for each band D household. This is an increase of £5.43 (or 4.6%) per band D property for the Town Council element of your Council Tax.

Didcot Town Council's part of your council tax bill is collected by South Oxfordshire District Council and this leaflet explains how the figure is arrived at and where the money goes.

The effects of the pandemic continue to be noticed in the hire income of our properties but is slowly increasing. Income from the Civic Hall and Willowbrook Leisure Centre (that the Town Council that has had to take back and manage in-house since December 2019) is beginning to contribute income that offsets their running costs and other activities. However, like all our residents the Council has seen utility bills across all DTC buildings rise that largely negates any operating surplus which has presented a challenge in terms of keeping the buildings open to the public.

Work on the new Community & Sports Pavilion at Edmonds Park continues and building works should start in April 2023. The splash park (delayed by Covid) now has planning permission and will be built following on from the new pavilion. Other major projects relate to the Council's climate strategy to reduce our carbon footprint and tackle climate change include installation of solar panels on the Civic Hall, the outside services depot at Edmonds Park and Willowbrook Leisure Centre. Together with installation of LED lighting, a better building management system and additional insulation these initiatives will reduce our carbon consumption and associated energy costs.

This is a summary of our budget for 2023/24.

Budget Summary for 2023/2024

Expenditure	£
Finance and General Purposes Committee	603,326
Grant Aid	45,000
Didcot Civic Hall	248,300
Environment & Climate Committee	432,675
Projects and PWLB repayments	252,604
Total	1,581,905
Less General Income expected	(244,050)
Less expected grant income – S106/CIL	(6,000)
Equals: total expenditure to be collected via Council Tax (the precept)	1,331,855

Dividing this precept figure by the tax base of 10,767.8 gives the Town Council's component of Council Tax for a Band D Property as £123.68 per year.

In more detail, the following describes how we have spent money in 2022/2023.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Town Council draws its income from relatively few sources and the Council Tax precept is by far the biggest source of revenue. The Council continually scrutinises expenditure and works to identify potential savings as well as other sources of income, particularly accessing relevant grants for some projects. Willowbrook Leisure Centre is now open for most of the week and is due to earn in excess of £40,000 this year. The Civic Hall is also on course to bring in around £100,000 for the first time since the pandemic. However these costs are almost entirely consumed by the cost of utilities in keeping these public buildings warm and safe to visit.

A major single cost remains the £123,000 paid annually to service the loan of £1.83 million used to refurbish and extend the Civic Hall and Town Council offices. This will be added to this year as the Council looks to borrow in the region of £2.4 million from the Public Works Loans Board to cover the cost of building the long awaited Community & Sports Pavilion at Edmonds Park. Another major project is the splash park at Edmonds Park that through prudent budgeting will be covered by specific DTC reserves and a small S106 contribution so does not contribute to this year's modest Council Tax increase.

In addition to these buildings, the Town Council has recently set up a charitable trust (CIO) to manage the Fleet Meadow Community Building as the current management committee has stood down. This will be run as a separate entity with DTC staff charging their time to the Trust. Our popular grant aid to voluntary organisations and groups will continue to operate and brings a total of £45,000 available to community groups to benefit Didcot's residents.

Since April 2022 grant aid has supported:

- Didcot Railway
- Wynter's Wish
- Didcot Concert Orchestra
- Homestart
- Didcot Barramundi Swimming Club
- Citizens Advice
- Free Christmas Dinner Project
- Plus more applications being processed
- Sustainable Didcot
- Didcot Foodbank
- Oxford Play Association
- TRAIN

The Environment and Climate Committee

The Environment and Climate Committee oversees outdoor services, which delivers the management and maintenance of parks and recreational open green spaces owned or leased by the Council and sports, leisure and recreational activities.

Amongst its new projects for 2022/2023 the Council plans to progress the following:

- On-going improvements at Ladygrove Lakes

- Improvements at Kynaston Road Cemetery
- Fully costed plans to build the Community & Sports pavilion in Edmonds Park
- Planning permission approved for new Splash Park at Edmonds Park
- Play area improvements at St Anne's Court
- Disabled swing at Loyd Park
- Completion of sand pit with play train at Ladygrove play area
- Planting of the Queen's Canopy at Ladygrove Park
- On-going of projects to aid the climate emergency

Our sites and day to day maintenance

Our large sites are at:

- Edmonds Park
- Ladygrove Park
- Smallbones Recreation Park
- Marsh Recreation Ground
- Great Western Drive Park
- Loyd Recreation Park
- Stubbings Land
- Millennium Wood
- St Anne's Court Playground
- Kynaston Road Cemetery
- Ladygrove Lakes
- Allotment sites:
 - New Road
 - Broadway
 - Wantage Road
 - Cockcroft Road
 - Mereland Road

Including some smaller sites, the Council manages a combined land area of over 100 acres. In terms of allotments the Council administers over 420 plots in conjunction with a users' liaison group that reports regularly on problems and successes.

An excellent team of full time grounds staff, led by the Outdoor Services Manager, maintains land owned by Didcot Town Council.

The work of the team includes:

- Tree care and annual planting
- Allotment maintenance
- Litter clearance
- Cutting grass and hedges
- Maintaining flower beds
- Play area equipment repairs and inspection
- Sports pitch maintenance
- Vehicle and machinery maintenance

The Property & Facilities Committee

This Committee manages the expanding property portfolio that belongs to Didcot Town Council. The properties include: Didcot Civic Hall and Council offices; Willowbrook Leisure Centre; Outside Services Depot at Edmonds Park; Loyd Pavilion and other facilities including the Civic Hall car park and the management of Fleet Meadow Community Hall (run under a separate Trust).

Over the year the Committee has approved a range of improvements to ensure that the buildings are in good condition and safe to open to the public. Major projects such as the fitting solar panels on the Civic Hall, Outside Services Depot and Willowbrook will help make the buildings more cost efficient and

contribute to the Council's commitment to reduce our carbon footprint. Additional works such as installing LED Lighting and insulation improvements will further reduce our energy consumption and running costs.

Feedback

Didcot Town Council would like to hear your views and any comments you may have on the services provided or what you would like to see in the future. Comments may be emailed to council@didcot.gov.uk, or in writing to Didcot Town Council, Town Council Offices, Britwell Road, Didcot, Oxon OX11 7HN, or hand them into the Council office on Britwell Road. In order to ensure you receive a response and so that we can verify you are a Didcot resident, please provide your name and address.

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
7.30PM ON MONDAY 20th MARCH at DIDCOT CIVIC HALL
Every Didcot resident is invited to attend.
Please forward your questions to the Town Council by Monday 13th March 2023