

Didcot Town Council

Address: Council Offices, Britwell Road, Didcot, OX11 7HN
Email: council@didcot.gov.uk
Tel: 01235 812637
Website: www.didcot.gov.uk



Guide to the Town Council element of your council tax for the year 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025

In 2024/2025 Didcot Town Council will receive £133.24 for each band D household. This is an increase of £9.56 per band D property for the Town Council element of your Council Tax. The percentage increase of 7.7% is offset by the increased number of housing and tax-payers – an increase of 2.48% - to leave the actual increase for tax payers of around 5.2%. This compares with an average increase of 10.9% for towns/parishes across all of south Oxfordshire.

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.

Income from the hire of the Civic Hall is almost back to pre-pandemic levels but this building is costly to run. Income from Willowbrook Leisure Centre (that the Town Council had to take back and manage in-house since December 2019) is almost breaking even as bookings continue to rise. Utility bills across all DTC buildings largely negates any operating surplus which has presented a challenge in terms of keeping the buildings open to the public and safe to use.

Two major projects which have dominated Council time over the past year is the new Community & Sports Pavilion at Edmonds Park and the splash park. The Pavilion is nearing completion with an opening planned for mid-March 2024 – bookings are already being received from prospective hirers. Tenders have been received to build the splash park and the Council is looking at the running costs of this new facility. The installation of solar panels on the Civic Hall, the outside services depot at Edmonds Park and Willowbrook Leisure Centre is already beginning to lower our energy costs. Together with installation of LED lighting and additional insulation these initiatives will reduce our carbon consumption and associated energy costs. This is a summary of our budget for 2024/25.

Budget Summary for 2024/2025

Expenditure	£
Finance and General Purposes Committee	528,026
Grant Aid	47,000
Didcot Civic Hall and Willowbrook Leisure Centre	228,417
Environment & Climate Committee	524,121
Projects and PWLB repayments	451,919
Total	1,779,483
Less General Income expected	(309,050)
Less expected grant income – S106/CIL	(0)
Equals: total expenditure to be collected via Council Tax (the precept)	1,470,433

Dividing this precept figure by the tax base of 11,035.3 gives the Town Council's component of Council Tax for a Band D Property as £133.24 per year.

In more detail, the following describes how we have spent money in 2023/2024.

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 £80,000 this year. The Civic Hall is also on course to bring in around £130,000 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. It is hoped to see this cost reduce as the solar panels bring important savings.

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. In addition a loan from the Public Works Loans Board of £2.4million to cover the cost of building the long awaited Community & Sports Pavilion at Edmonds Park will add a further £173,162 of interest annually. Another major project is the installation of a splash park at Edmonds Park which will be covered by specific DTC reserves and CIL. The Council is currently looking at the running costs of this new facility.

The Town Council is now running the Fleet Meadow Community Building as a charitable trust (CIO). Bookings have been constant with this well loved building and improvements to the fabric of the building continue. 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 – increasing to £47,000 for the new financial year.

Since April 2023 grant aid has supported:

- Didcot Library
- Ridgway Education Trust
- Whispering Jungle Show
- Clean Slate
- Abingdon Bridge Charity
- Citizens Advice
- Free Christmas Dinner Project
- Plus more applications being processed
- Didcot Baby Monday
- Didcot Baptist Church
- Didcot Foodbank
- Be Free Young Carers
- Restore

The Environment and Climate Committee

The Environment and Climate Committee oversees all 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 our projects for 2023/2024 the Council progressed the following:

- Clearance; bank repairs and path improvements at Ladygrove Lakes
- Noticeboard and path repairs at Kynaston Road Cemetery
- Reinstatement of eighty hanging baskets
- Purchase of a poly tunnel to grow plants for community flowerbeds
- Setting up of a community planting scheme
- Employment of a horticultural apprentice
- New signage at the Millennium Woods
- Setting up of a management group for Ladygrove projects
- Replacement of play equipment and repairs across all sites

Our sites and day to day maintenance

Our large sites are at:

- Edmonds Park
- Ladygrove Park
- Smallbone 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
- Didcot Civic Hall and Remembrance Garden

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
- Sport court maintenance
- Vehicle and machinery maintenance
- Overseeing burials
- Cemetery maintenance
- Maintenance of the War Memorial and Garden

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). The new Community and Sports Pavilion at Edmonds Park will add to the portfolio from March 2024.

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 include a full refurbishment of Loyd Pavilion including asbestos removal; new ceiling and roof; gutter clearing and roof repairs to the Civic Hall, insulation to areas of Willowbrook Leisure Centre to help make the buildings more cost efficient and contribute to the Council's commitment to reduce our carbon footprint. This Committee has also been working on individual websites for the DTC buildings which will showcase the rooms for hire and be easier to book. It is hoped that these will go "live" in 2024.

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 18th MARCH 2024 at DIDCOT CIVIC HALL
Every Didcot resident is invited to attend.
Please forward your questions to the Town Council by Monday 11th March 2024