

Cramlington Town Council
Meeting 3rd November 2022
Budget 2023/24

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report asks the Council to consider agreeing a Precept and budget for 2023/24 and to confirm priorities for new spending up to 2024/25. The report suggests that in response to the current cost of living crisis, and its financial impact on many sections of the community, that the Council should keep any increase in the Precept to a minimum. In order to accommodate inflationary rises every effort will continue to be made to identify efficiency savings.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council has previously agreed guiding principles for its budget, which demonstrate a high degree of prudence and financial responsibility. The proposed principles for setting the budget for 2023/24 maintain this underlying approach:

- Any rise in the Precept must take account of affordability.
- New schemes should be capital projects with minimum on-going revenue implications.
- New projects must demonstrate clear community benefits and utilise external resources where possible.
- All expenditure should clearly demonstrate value for money.
- Where possible the Council should engage the community, utilizing and co-ordinating their assets and resources.
- Priority should be given to supporting the most vulnerable sections of the community.
- The current level of expenditure on planting will not be increased, but changes may be made in how the current budget is used.

3. Priorities for 2023/24

- 3.1 As part of its preparation for the 2022/23 budget, Council agreed a three-year schedule of priorities. This schedule is attached as Table, 1 and schemes currently underway are highlighted.

- 3.2 Since the schedule was approved additional priorities have been identified:

- Speed indicators have been agreed and will shortly be installed at locations around the town; these have been funded from the budget for the current financial year.
- Discussions are on-going concerning the community asset transfer of sites at Alexandra Park and Cumbria Road. Alexandra Park will be the site of new adventure playground, the costs for which are ring-fenced within the 2022/23 budget. However, the transfer may extend to a wider area, with potential to provide further play and sport facilities in future years. Therefore, it is proposed that £50,000 be allocated for the further development of the site in 2023/24. This could include the provision of new outdoor gym equipment and the renovation of the landscaped area. The site at Cumbria Road has potential to accommodate a dementia garden, and an area for supervised play. If these transfers proceed, it is proposed that design and preliminary works be undertaken in 2023/24 at an estimated cost of up to £50,000. Further works will be undertaken to complete the project in 2024/25. If available, external funding will be sought for this scheme.

- A further review of bus shelter provision and improvement; from earlier work undertaken, expenditure of £25,000 each year for 2 years is likely to be required.
- The playground maintenance budget requires a substantial increase, not least to deal with repeated vandalism of facilities. It is advised that a realistic maintenance budget of £50,000 is required. This amount has been included as committed expenditure.
- In response to growing youth anti-social behaviour the town council has entered into partnership with CVYP to provide youth clubs at three locations in Cramlington. The full year cost of this provision is £26,000
- It is certain that prices will continue to increase over the coming year and provision must be made to cover the costs of further inflation. To meet these, as yet unknown price increases, it is proposed to set aside a contingency fund of £50,000.

4. Financial Position

4.1 The cost of the above proposals is £201,000. Taken together with committed expenditure of £813,000, the Council's estimated budget for 2023/24 is £1,014,000. This includes repricing and savings of £25,000 resulting from restructuring. Details are provided in the attached Table 2.

4.2 At this stage the level of change to the tax base is not known, but any increase will permit a limited degree of flexibility to accommodate unforeseen demands on the budget and to rebuild the Council's Reserve.

4.3 The current precept is £1,019,000 which relates to an annual charge for a Band D property of £116.46p. In consideration of the cost-of-living crisis, the town council is advised to limit any increase in the Precept to a level sufficient to allow on-going projects as set out in section 3, to proceed. This will allow the town council to limit its Precept rise to 3%, increasing the Band D charge to £119.95p a year. Members should be aware that over 70% of dwellings in Cramlington fall into Bands A-C and will consequently pay less.

4.4 Should the town council support this approach, Members should be aware that any new, as yet unidentified schemes, could only be bought forward if one or more schemes in Table 1 are postponed or deleted. Members are invited at this stage to propose potential new schemes and possible revisions to the priorities set out above.

5. Reserves

5.1 The original schemes agreed for the current year anticipated a withdrawal from Reserves of around £47,000, leaving £150,000 in hand for any unforeseen events. As a result of additional schemes and the unprecedented cost of storm damage, it is likely that £79,000 of the Reserve will be used, leaving around £118,000.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Council is recommended to:

- a. Agree to continue with on-going projects as set out in section 3.2 or to identify alternative projects set out in the priorities schedule 2022/25.
- b. Confirm an increase in the playground's maintenance budget to £50,000 a year.
- c. Agree to a contingency budget of £50,000 to meet unforeseen inflationary costs.
- d. Agree to increase the charge for a Band D property by 3% to £119.95 a year for 2023/24, giving estimated Precept income of £1,050,000.

- e. Note the likely reduction in Reserves and seek to achieve the previously agreed level of £150,000.

Table 1

Proposed New Schemes 2022-24

1. Undertake and implement the bus shelter review.
2. Progress the playground improvement programme.
3. Review playground provision/facilities in new housing estates.
4. Review wider sports provision i.e., free to use tennis courts.
5. Extend outdoor gym provision.
6. Provision of alternative/activity playgrounds.
7. Seek an asset transfer of Alexandra Park pavilion to provide a community café and other facilities.
8. Provision of "gateway" signage at key entrances to the town.
9. Provision of a "doggy activity" park.
10. Provision of public art across the town.
11. Establish of youth clubs to complement and enhance current provision.
12. Production of a town map showing cycling and walking routes, playgrounds, and a proposed heritage trail.
13. Enhancement of Cramlington Station.
14. Painting programme for playgrounds, bus shelters and railings in town centre.
15. Enhancement/planting of roundabout at entrance to Cramlington hospital.
16. Re-position raised bed in the Village.
17. Establish a Police Partnership.
18. Extend current programme of events to include a food festival, young people's jobs fair, arts, and crafts fair/exhibitions provision of the adventure playground.
19. A comprehensive review of wards to identify needs and interventions; this would involve a maximum of 2 wards a year commencing with West and Eastfield.

Notes relating to the above

1. *New shelters will be provided this year at East Cramlington and Northumbria Road. It has been proposed to undertake a further review in advance of budget preparation for 2023/24.*
2. *A new adventure playground has been agreed for Alexandra Park and a replacement playground for Weldon Road. Both projects will commence this year. It is proposed to increase the playground maintenance budget to £40,000*
5. *he proposal to replace the outdoor gym at Alexandra Park has not been progressed in favour of the adventure playground. Subject to the transfer to CTC of a wider area at the park a new outdoor gym could be provided in future years.*
7. *Discussions are continuing with NCC over the community asset transfer of land at Alexandra Park and Cumbria Way.*
8. *An alternative approach is being developed based on a public art theme/trail which will incorporate features at main entrances to the town.*
9. *Project approved subject to transfer of the site by NCC*
10. *See 8 above.*
11. *This will be a priority for the youth co-ordinator when in post*

13. *Meetings have been held with Network Rail and Arriva. The scope for alterations is restricted by health and safety considerations and a reluctance by the operators to engage in this project. Further contact will be made to progress improvements.*
14. *Bus shelter/playground painting has been undertaken by CTC and NCC have agreed to painting railings on Forum Way.*
15. *The Services Manager held discussion with the hospital trust prior to leaving. Further contact will be made.*
16. *Members views are sought on the removal of the raised bed.*
17. *Regular scheduled meetings are held with local police officers and there continues to be frequent informal contact at officer level.*
18. *The Jubilee food festival was cancelled due to a poor take up by stall holders. A programme of events for the remainder of this year and 2023/23 will be prepared and overseen by the Youth and Communities Committee.*
19. *Difficulties have been encountered with obtaining up to data information. It is proposed that reviews await the publication of 2021 census data.*

Table 2

Budget Areas	Current Budget	Proposed Budget
	2022-23	2023-24
	£	£
Management & Administration	145,200	125,500
Support Services	32,500	34,000
Communications	32,400	33,400
Community & Youth	122,600	144,100
Operations Team	186,800	199,300
Environmental & Civil Enforcement	41,200	44,000
General Running Costs	34,300	33,300
Democracy	6,500	6,600
Allotments	54,000	
Playgrounds	32,000	66,000
Operational Services	82,100	62,000
Other Services	56,000	46,000
Council Offices	49,120	51,100
Surveyors House		
Operations Depot	17,280	18,700
Weldon Playground	80,000	
Adventure Playground	100,000	
Dog Activity Area	26,000	
Alexandra Park		50,000
Cumbria Road		50,000
Contingency for Inflation		50,000
Unallocated		36,000
Total Expenditure	1,098,000	1,050,000
Precept	1,019,000	1,050,000
Withdrawal from Reserves	79,000	
Total Financing	1,098,000	1,050,000

Community and Youth Manager Report

Full Council 3rd November 2022

1. Purpose

1.1 To advise provide a report to Full Council on partnership working with CVA Blyth Valley and to request a financial contribution to support the CVA's work in Cramlington

2. Background

2.1 Cramlington Town Council Community and Youth Team have been working in collaboration with CVA Blyth Valley (CVABV) to provide support to voluntary and community organisations in Cramlington. CVABV has given direct support to 32 Cramlington community organisations in 2022. These include Friends of Doddington Wood, Beaconhill Community Association, Dogs First, Mayfield Community Centre and martial arts groups.

2.2 CVABV has helped 13 groups Cramlington groups secure funding of £142,721.00 to-date with further groups awaiting decisions.

2.3 In partnership with Cramlington Town Council, CVABV designed and implemented a free "Steps to Success" quality assurance programme supporting community groups to identify their strengths and to address their weaknesses. Local statutory funders have agreed to recognise this quality mark, improving access to community chest funds.

2.4 CVABV participated in 2 Cramlington Town Council Funding events, giving presentations to highlight the work they do and promoting the Steps to Success Quality Assurance Scheme. At the events they made direct contact with 25 Cramlington community groups who they have continued to support after the event.

2.5 To support their work in Cramlington, CVA Blyth Valley have requested are asking for a contribution of £5000. This amount is higher than the £2,500 limit available under the Community Chest and requires the specific approval of Council.

2.6 Blyth Town Council make an annual contribution of £18,000 to CVA Blyth Valley and Seaton Valley contribute £4500.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the committee consider the report and approve a £5000 annual contribution to CVA Blyth Valley to support the work they do in Cramlington.

Community and Voluntary Action Blyth Valley

Cramlington community support 2021-22

CVA Blyth Valley has continued to provide free capacity building support to voluntary and community organisations in Blyth, Cramlington and Seaton Valley throughout this year. The following report concentrates on the support we have given to community groups in Cramlington.

CVABV have an experienced, well qualified and dedicated team, all of whom are extremely effective and regionally recognised for delivering a wide range of high quality capacity building and community development services, with the stated aim of enabling our local VCS to make a sustained impact in the local community.

CVABV support local groups in successfully developing new community initiatives and in attracting the necessary start-up funding and resources to address local needs and in making a real difference in their local community.

CVABV tailor our services to the needs of individual groups, targeting resources where they are most needed, working in hard to reach communities providing one-to-one support where needed. Our services equip local groups with the knowledge and the know how to make a real difference in their local community.

Working one to one with local groups equips them with the necessary skills and experience to do more for themselves in the future, with minimal appropriate support. In this way we build the capacity of the individual and of the group. This approach encourages people in the community to take a very active part in finding local solutions to problems they are facing within their own area. As a result of this approach we will have a more informed, more qualified and more experienced VCS equipped with many of the necessary skills they need to deliver their services more effectively and really make a difference within disadvantaged communities.

CVA Blyth Valley has given direct support to 32 Cramlington community organisations this year

Beaconhill Community Association
East Hartford Community Association
Cramlington Village Community Centre
Mayfields Community Centre
Little Miracles
Cramlington Rockets RFC
Mind Strong NE
Skills 4 U NE
Eastfield Community Association
Northern Butterflies
Cramlington Table Tennis Club
Cramlington Local History Club
Healthwise
Legacare
Friends of Doddington Wood
Cramlington Craft Club
Dogs First – animal welfare charity

Friends of Valley Park
Cramlington Heritage Hub
Blood Red Cancer Charity
Church of the Nazarene
Cramlington Impact
Cramlington Craft Club
Dogs First – animal welfare charity
Friends of Valley Park
Cramlington Heritage Hub
Blood Red Cancer Charity
Juno Michi Judo Club
Jay Suu Muay Thai Kick Boxing Club
Cramlington Community Art Project
Make Do and Mend
St Peter and Pauls Primary School Parent and Teachers Association

Examples of the support given to these community venues are:

Charity Registration
Funding searches and information
Support to complete funding applications
Help and advice to help complete end of grant reports for funders
Networking and partnerships contacts and information
Supporting and recruiting volunteers
Training information Food hygiene, safeguarding etc
Policy development
Food standards, GDPR and CCTV regulations information
Risk assessments
Setting up new groups
Advice on legal structures and support with constitutions
Support to set up bank accounts
Group promotion
Publicity and promotion
Improving sustainability
Monitoring and evaluation
Safeguarding advice and good practise
Converting to CIO
Basic financial management
Planning and organising events
Project development
Energy efficiency

We helped Cramlington community venues to identify potential improvements to energy saving measures:

- Sent links to groups with ideas about energy saving measures. .
- Hosted Ballinger Trust event giving energy saving grants to 4 Cramlington community venues (Beaconhill, East Hartford, Cramlington Village and Mayfields)

Funding Secured

We have supported 13 Cramlington community groups who have successfully secured funding of £142,721 this year

East Hartford	6200
Legacare	11000
Friends of Doddington Wood	14767
Northern Butterflies	75444
Skill 4 U NE	1000
Beaconhill Community Association	4406
Cramlington Village Community Centre	1500
Mayfield Community Centre	19404
Cramlington Craft Club	1000
Juno Michi Judo Club	4500
Friends of Valley Park	1500
Jai Suu Muay Thai Kickboxing Club	1000
Cramlington Community Art Project	1000

In addition there are currently funding applications submitted, with Cramlington groups awaiting the outcome.

There may also have been some applications that have been successful in securing funding, that we have not as yet heard about from those groups.

CVA Blyth Valley Social Media

Website www.cvabv.org.uk

Facebook, Twitter and regular 2 weekly ezine

- We increased access to social media for our community groups
- We expanded CVA social media and increased circulation

We have advertised volunteering opportunities in our ezine for:-

Cramlington Food Bank
Girlguiding Cramlington

We have promoted activities and services of:-

Cramlington Youth Network
Mind Strong
Cramlington Community Allotment
Dogs First
Mayfields Community Centre

We have also supported and advertised all of Cramlington Town Councils events, and advertised the activities on offer in local community centres every week.

How we have involved people from Cramlington community in the work we do

We have built on our existing relationships with local groups to identify their priority areas of support which included:-

- Getting people back in using community facilities again after covid.

- Increasing the number of user groups in local centres providing broader services and support
- Increasing number of events and activities hosted by local centres improving their engagement with the more vulnerable members of their community.- informing of services available to them
- Starting a new community network informing and supporting local groups to develop and grow their services improving their sustainability
- Helping to recruit volunteers and trustees
- Improvements and refurbishments of community assets encouraging and attracting new users

Steps to Success

In partnership with Cramlington Town Council and Northumberland Communities Together we have designed and implemented “Steps to Success” our own quality assurance programme supporting groups to identify their strengths and to address their weaknesses. As this is a home grown in house scheme we have been able to provide it free. Local statutory funders have agreed to recognise this quality mark, improving access to community chest funds.

Cramlington Funding Events

We participated in 2 Cramlington Town Council Funding events, giving presentations to highlight the work we do and also promoting the new Steps to Success Quality Assurance Scheme. The events were well attended and we made direct contact with 25 Cramlington community groups who we continue to support with their issues after the event.

Examples of support given to Cramlington Groups

Friends of Doddington Wood

Doddington Wood is a woodland area situated between Dudley Lane and Doddington Drive in Cramlington. The woodland area has a long history of being used as an illegal dumping ground and a source of anti-social behaviour.

Friends of Doddingwood is a new environmental community group set up by local volunteers who are committed to making a difference in their local community and we aim to preserve, enhance and promote Doddington Wood as a natural woodland for the benefit of local people and wildlife.

So far they have achieved so much in a short space of time including:-

- Clearing all the litter from the Wood and laid bark chippings on paths.
- Clearing overgrown greenery from the main pathways
- Clearing fly tipped garden waste.
- Erecting a notice board to keep residents informed about what is happening
- Planting bulbs and wild flowers
- Introducing bee hives
- Held several community events

The difference their efforts have made to the wood is very visible and they have exciting plans for the future of Doddington Woods.

Community and Voluntary Action Blyth Valley (CVABV) helped Friends of Doddington Wood to set up as a community group, helped them draft policies and procedures and also helped them to apply successfully for over £14,700 of funding.

East Hartford Community Centre

CVABV have supported East Hartford community centre for many years. The centre is successfully run by dedicated volunteers who give their time to deliver activities including a food hub, lunch clubs, and community events. Over the years CVABV have supported East Hartford to continue their good work and make a real difference in their community. This support has included support for new and existing trustees, developing policies and procedures, promoting their activities, funding information to sustain existing and develop new projects.

During lockdown CVABV worked with East Hartford management committee to set up a weekly food hub, providing essential food bags to those in need. This service continues to run from the centre and is well attended by local people.

We recently supported them to secure funding of £6200 to provide a Jubilee event and events and activities throughout the year.

Dogs First

Dogs First based in Cramlington has been successfully involved in animal rescue for several years. Earlier this year their good work was recognised when they were declared Cramlington Town Council #Love Cramlington Charity Champions and collected £200 from the Newcastle Building Society who sponsored the award.

As an animal rescue service Dogs First takes in stray and unwanted domestic animals. Its activities include:

- Rescuing and rehoming animals in need.
- Arranging veterinary care.
- Providing foster care of animals for people being hospitalised.
- Run a pet food bank for people struggling to feed their animals.
- Help and advice to enable people to keep their animals.

This year CVA Blyth Valley has helped Dogs First draft a new constitution and complete an application to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). CIO's provide a means for charities to incorporate and gain the benefits available to companies without the burden of dual regulation to both the Charity Commission and Companies House. In April 2022, Dogs First got the good news that its application to become a CIO had been successful at their first attempt. CVA Blyth Valley continue to support Dogs First with grant applications for funding.

Mayfields Community Centre

Mayfields is a well-established and popular community centre. Activities provided by the centre cater for all ages from children to older adults and the elderly. Activities

including judo, karate, dance classes, weight watchers, bingo, lunches, and coffee mornings for the over 60, band practice, arts & crafting, parent and toddlers, parties, fundraising events, social evenings and meeting hire. Food packs from its FareShare Food -Hub are also distributed out into the community to those who need it.

CVA Blyth Valley has a long record of supporting Mayfields Community Centre. In the past year we have helped them to update their policies and working practices and to make grant applications and to receive upwards of £19,000 in grant funding.

Our support has enabled them to re-open after Covid, run a weekly meal club, organise children's parties at Christmas, Easter and Halloween, a Jubilee party plus coach trips away to Flamingo Land, Beamish and Scarborough. They have also been able to modernise the community centre with new tables, stage curtains and carry out repairs to the centre's external structure.

Some of the positive feedback we have had this year from the groups and organisations we have supported:-

- *The Mayfields centre Committee would like to thank CVABV for all the funding they have supported us to secure, the Flamingo trip, Xmas, Easter and jubilee parties, and loads more, thank you, the committee.*
Mayfields Community Centre in Cramlington
- *Just to let you know that they gave us the funding, thanks for all your support and guidance. - £500 from Northumbria Police and Crime Commission.*
Juno Michi Judo Club in Cramlington
- *Good news- we got the Sport England Grant. Thank you for your help and support we wouldn't have got it if it wasn't for you so thank you. - £4000 grant from Sport England.*
Juno Michi Judo Club in Cramlington
- *A very big thank you from the Cramlington Craft Group. Your help with the application for an award from Cramlington Town Council's Community Chest was invaluable. As you probably know we were awarded £500 which we will use for the essential purchase of a printer. The money will also be used for educational purposes as well as for much needed assorted craft materials. we look forward to seeing you again and once again Thank You.*
Marina Callaghan – Secretary of Cramlington Craft Group
- *"I'd like to thank CVA Blyth Valley for all their support in helping Dogs First to recently become a registered charity and now for achieving the Gold Level in the Steps to Success Quality Award Scheme (developed by CVA Blyth Valley). We couldn't have done it without their support".*
Pat Heard of Dogs First.

**TS Bradley
CVABV**

Civility and Respect Report

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is for members to consider the pledge proposed by The National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and One Voice Wales (OVW), to start a cultural change for the local council sector.

2. Background

2.1 Throughout the local council sector, there are growing concerns about the impact bullying, harassment and intimidation is having on councils, councillors and staff and the resulting effectiveness of local councils. Civility and respect should be at the heart of public life, and good governance is fundamental to ensuring an effective and well-functioning democracy at all levels.

3. The Pledge

3.1 The civility and respect pledge is outlined in Appendix A. By adopting the Civility and Respect Pledge, Cramlington Town Council would be committing to modelling high standards of behaviour, being mutually respectful of councillors and staff, to reduce the type of conduct that can lead to complaints and protecting councillors, staff, the public and the reputation of local government.

3.2 The Council is already well equipped in meeting the standards outlined in the pledge with no requirements not currently being met. Therefore, should the Council wish to agree to the proposal, no further action would be required.

4. Recommendations

The Council is recommended to:

4.1 Note the report.

4.2 Consider and advise the Council's position on signing up to the pledge.

Definition of Civility and Respect

Civility means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word.

Examples of ways in which you can show respect are by listening and paying attention to others, having consideration for other people's feelings, following protocols and rules, showing appreciation and thanks, and being kind.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), and One Voice Wales (OVW), believe now is the time to put civility and respect at the top of the agenda and start a culture change for the local council sector.

By our council signing up to the civility and respect pledge we are demonstrating that our council is committed to treating councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.

Signing up is a simple process, which requires councils to register and agree to the following statements:

Statement	Tick to agree
Our council has agreed that it will treat all councillors, clerk and all employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.	
Our council has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff	
Our council has signed up to Code of Conduct for councillors	
Our council has good governance arrangements in place including, staff contracts, and a dignity at work policy.	
Our council will commit to seeking professional help in the early stages should civility and respect issues arise.	
Our council will commit to calling out bullying and harassment when it and when it happens.	
Our council will continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to being a role model/champion council e.g., via the Local Council Award Scheme	
Our council supports the continued lobbying for the change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate.	