

11 Parish Council history, status, levels of budgets and other resources

11.1 History

11.1.1 What is a Parish Council?

Parish councils are the first tier of local government and the closest to the electors of the parish. They may choose to call themselves a Parish or Town Council depending on the number of residents, but this does not alter their status or responsibilities.

Comberton Parish Council was established in 1895. The Council consists of 13 councillors who are elected for a four-year term of office. It employs a part time Clerk to the Council who is also the Responsible Finance Officer (R.F.O.) to implement policy decisions. The majority of funding is raised by a precept on each adult resident in the parish of Comberton.

Today the role of a parish council is more important than ever and the Rural White Paper proposed to increase parish council powers further. As the closest tier of local government to the people it is considered to be best in control of many of the basic village services that are often taken for granted.

Amongst its main responsibilities are the maintenance of parish assets; the provision and maintenance of public open space which includes sport, recreation and play facilities; the provision of allotments; the provision and maintenance of seats, litter and dog bins for public use.

Comberton Parish Council is responsible for the preparation and control of its annual revenue budget; the control of its finances and for setting of the level of precept which is collected by the District Council on behalf of the Parish Council. Other income may be raised via rents and leases, hire charges, interest, grants, donations and sales of assets.

The elected councillors meet monthly (currently the second Wednesday in the month) to decide on most local issues.

11.2 Parish Council Powers

11.2.1 What Can Local Councils Do?

There are over fifty powers that parish councils can use to provide services for parishioners, these include:

- Provision of village halls, sports facilities, footpaths, recreation grounds, lighting, war memorials and cemeteries.
- They are consulted by the District Council on local planning applications
- They have the right to appoint school governors.
- They have the power to supply approved crime prevention measures.

- They can provide and rent out allotments.

A portion of the council tax is used to fund the expenditure of your parish council. This is the only tier that has no Government spending cap. This means that the parish council can provide any facility that parishioners want as long as it has the statutory power to do so. The parish council may also borrow money, with the permission of the Secretary of State, for large projects.

The powers which have been vested in Parish, Town and Community Councils by Acts of Parliament are summarised here.

Each description is brief and is intended to be a general indication. Like all powers given to public bodies the powers of local councils are defined in detail in legislation and these details may include a requirement to obtain the consent of another body (for example the approval of the County Council for the installation of a litter bin on a pavement).

Local Councils must exercise their powers also subject to the provisions of the general law (for example planning permission is necessary for a sports pavilion).

The powers are listed alphabetically. Where a power is marked with an asterisk the council may, in addition to exercising the power itself, help another body to act by giving financial assistance.

Allotments	Provision and maintenance of allotments for cultivation.
Arts*	Developing and improving knowledge of the arts and the crafts which serve the arts.
Baths	Provision of baths and wash-houses (which in modern terms may mean a launderette).
Borrowing	Parish, Town and Community Councils can borrow money for up to a maximum of 25 years with loan sanction consent. The Council must have loan sanction consent <i>before</i> Borrowing.
Cemeteries*	Provision and maintenance of burial grounds, cemeteries, crematoria, mortuaries and post-mortem rooms.
Church yards	Power to contribute to the costs of a churchyard in use and a <i>duty</i> to maintain any closed churchyard where the duty has been transferred by the Church of England.
Clocks*	Provision and maintenance of public clocks, on churches or elsewhere.
Commons	Power to protect any finally registered common which has no registered owner.

Crime prevention*	installation of equipment and establishment of schemes for the detection or prevention of crime; making grants to the police authority for these purposes.
Entertainments*	Provision of any form of public entertainment and any premises for giving entertainments. (This includes maintaining bands or orchestras and providing for dancing.)
Halls*	Provision of buildings for public meetings and functions, for indoor sports or physical recreation, or for the use of clubs or societies having recreational, social or athletic objects.
Legal Proceedings	Power to prosecute and defend any legal proceedings in the interests of the inhabitants. Power to take part in any public local inquiry.
Lighting	Provision and maintenance of any <i>footway</i> lighting which lights roads or pavements provided the columns are not above specified heights.
Litter*	Provision of litter-bins in streets and support for anti-litter campaigns.
Open Spaces	Provision and maintenance of public open spaces, pleasure grounds and public walks.
Parking Places	Provision and management of car and cycle parks.
Parks	Provision and maintenance of public parks and appropriate facilities.
Planning	Local councils have a right to be notified of any planning application affecting their area and to make comments which the planning authority must take into account.
Playing Fields*	Provision and maintenance of land for any kind of outdoor recreation, including boating pools.
Ponds*	Power to deal with ponds, pools, or other places containing filth or matter prejudicial to health.
Public Lavatories	Provision and maintenance of public lavatones.
Rights of Way	Maintenance of public footpaths and bridleways.
Roadside Verges	Power to plant and maintain roadside verges.
Seats*	Provision and maintenance of public seats on the highway.
Shelters*	Provision and maintenance of shelters for general public use and also particularly for bus passengers.

Signs	Power to erect signs which warn of dangers or announce a place name, or indicate a bus stop.
Swimming*	Provision of indoor or outdoor swimming pools or bathing places.
Tourism*	Provision of facilities for conferences and encouragement of recreational and business tourism.
Traffic calming	contribution towards the cost of traffic calming works provided by highway authorities.
Transport*	establishment of car-sharing and taxi fare concession schemes; making grants for community bus services and bus services for the elderly or disabled; investigation of public transport, road and traffic provision and needs; provision of information about public transport services.
Village Green*	Powers to maintain the village or town green.
General Expenditure Power	In any situation <i>not</i> covered by one of the specific powers described above a council may spend money on any purpose which in its opinion is of direct benefit to its area or to the inhabitants. The total expenditure by the council on all the cases under this general power must not in any financial year exceed £3.50 per local government elector in the parish or town or community. (NB This amount is due to rise to £5 per local government elector in 2003)

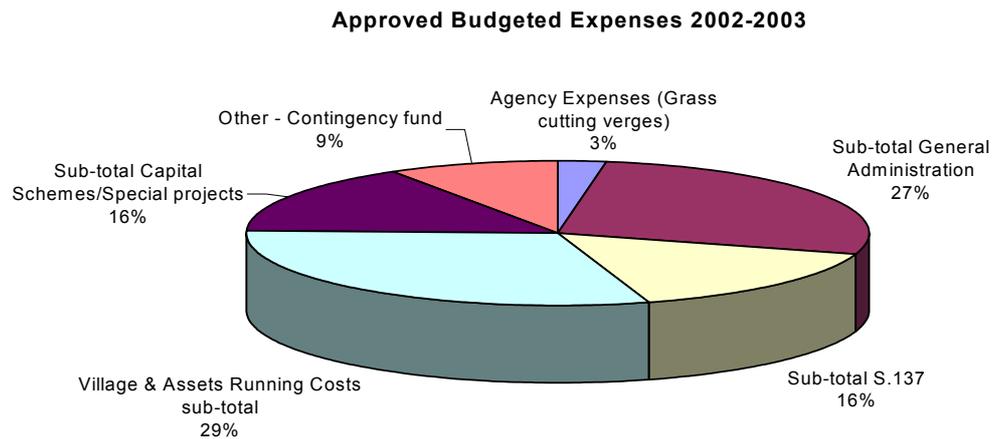
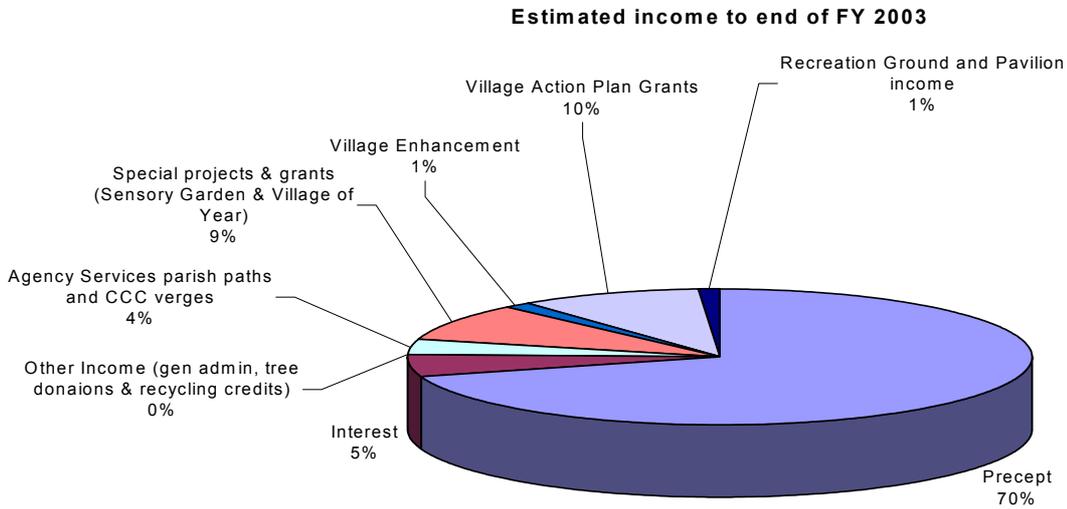
Summarised from a document produced by The National Association of Local Councils (representing Parish, Town and Community Councils) 109 Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3LD and dated May 1997

11.2.2 The Parish Council incurs annual expenditure on items such as:

- the management and maintenance of its sport and recreation facilities;
- grass cutting on public open spaces;
- emptying of dog and litter bins;
- administration costs (including staff salaries);
- insurance;
- publicity;
- grants to village organisations
- special projects.

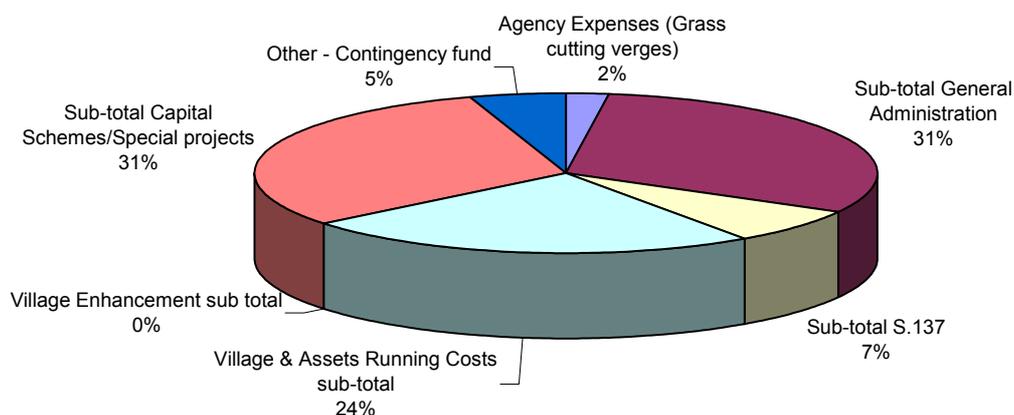
The graphs below show both the income and expenditure as incurred by Comberton Parish Council for the financial year ending 2003:

1 & 2



¹ Estimated income to end of FY 2003

² Approved Budget Expenses 2002-2003

Approved Budget Expenditure 2003-2004

11.2.3 Levels of Budget

11.2.3.1 Assets

The Parish Council's assets as recorded on 31 March 2002 amounted to £248,324.00 as detailed below:

Quantity	Asset	Description	Value
1	New village Hall	Old HORSAs hut	£116514
1	New pavilion	Brick with tile roof	£74459
2	Bus shelters	Brick with tile roof	£8740
	Safety surfacing		£6850
1	Garage	Brick built with flat roof	£5828
1	Chuck Wagon		£3000
8	Litter bins		£2800
1	Hillfield Road Bridge	Wooden	£2500
	New pavilion contents	Miscellaneous contents	£1884
1	Fun Buggy		£1800
1	Sand pit		£1800

³ Approved Budget Expenditure 2003-2004

1	Swings		£1400
1	Snapper		£1250
3	Seats	Wooden with concrete legs	£1200
1	Slide		£1100
1	Rocking Horse		£700
	New Village Hall contents	Insurance value on miscellaneous items	£1024
1	Recreation ground inc gate		£1000
1	Sea-saw		£1000
	Computing equipment	Including scanner; printer; software	£860
1	Mower	Hayter 21	£789
1	Village sign	Wooden painted sign on wooden post	£729
1	Notice board	Wooden three door	£600
2	Dog waste bins		£500
1	Village pump	Wooden	£438
1	Mower	(Masport) Denis	£367
	Brush Cutter		£367
1	Hedge trimmer	Purchased in 1998	£300
	Safety equipment and tools		£220
1	Mini-Globe		£200
1	Football goal		£200
1	Notice board	Wooden	£175
1	Notice board	Wooden	£175
1	Notice board		£175
	Small mower		£147
2	Dog posts		£100
1	Sprayer		£90
2	Bat boxes	Wooden	£50
1	Parking sign		£36
1	Litter bin	Concrete purchased Nov 2000	
2	Seat	Wooden with concrete legs?	£700
	Seat	Wooden with concrete legs?	£350
1	Village Hall site	Includes gate and gate posts and fencing	

	Fencing and path	Fences at recreation ground and along path to Fox's Way Allotments and path to Hillfield Road Bridge	
1	Car park		
1	Tennis courts	(Refurbished 2000 - £10,000 approx.)	
1	Bowling green and Bowls pavilion		
3	Litter bins	Green anti-crow bins 2 purchased Oct 2000	
	Office furniture	Desk Filing cabinet 4 draw Filing cabinet 2 draw Tall double door metal cabinet	<i>(included in pavilion contents insurance above)</i>
2	Chairs	Office chair and soft chair	
	Miscellaneous stationery		
	Telephone answering machine		
3	Planting areas	Including plants	
	Pond	Including 'Deep Water' sign	
	Trees and hedging	See separate tree report	

Leases

- *The Old Village Hall site* is leased to the Comberton Village Institute Trustees at a peppercorn rent (not demanded in this financial year).
- *The New Village Hall* is leased to the Village Hall Management Committee at a peppercorn rent (not demanded in this financial year).
- *Land* off Long Road and to the rear of Fox's Way is let at a peppercorn rent to the Allotments and Gardens Associations for allotments for a peppercorn rent (not demanded this financial year)
- *The Pavilion* is let at a peppercorn rent (not demanded in this financial year) to the Pavilion Management Committee for benefit of sports clubs in the village. The Parish Council has an office in the building.

11.2.3.2 Funds (estimated at end of FY2003)

Money in reserves	e2003
Youth facilities <i>o/s</i> £8,000 from Leach Homes total fund then £13,000	5000.00
Waymarking (additional)	1500.00
P3 grant (waymarking £160; kissing gate £260; levelling BW7 £100; Mechanical sweeper £100)	620.00
Village Hall	2000.00
Bus shelter West Street	2000.00
Land purchase fund. The Parish Council wish to purchase land adjoining the recreation ground and a fund was established in a previous FY year. Following the recent ruling from the Secretary of State the Parish Council has begun negotiations with the landowners.	35980.00
Legal fees for VH Lease <i>legal fees for the new 5year Lease o/s</i>	2979.00
Village Design Statement	2000.00
Reserves sub-total	£52079.00

