

BUDGET 2003/2004

COUNCILLOR QUERIES

Page	Item	Question	Response
4.28	Council Tax – Equipment & Supplies	Increase in budget	This is to cover cost of procedure manuals
	Printing	Increase in Budget	To produce e-government leaflets
4.31	Emergency Planning Equipment, Tools & Materials	Increase in Budget	Replacing water fire extinguishers with dry powder for safety reasons.
	Special Item - Emergency Exercise	Increase in Budget	The budget was reduced last year as an exercise was not expected to be conducted. It is intended to carry out an emergency exercise during 2003/4.
	Special Item – Communication equipment	Increase in Budget	There is an annual provision to meet the cost of replacing/repairing equipment. The increase is to cover our annual contribution to the County emergency radio system which was replaced this year. Set up costs were met by a Home Office grant.
4.34	Day centre – Repairs and maintenance	Increase in Budget	To carry out works on the external decoration
4.36	Management of Rec. Grounds – Special items	Increase in Budget	Various planned works including: Fencing for Open Spaces Resurface Great Wakering Sport Centre Car Park and works at the Reservoir. See separate list already circulated.
	- Trees shrubs & grounds	Increase in Budget	Ragwort treatment particularly at Sweyne Park
4.37	Leisure Client Salaries & car allowances	Increase in Budget	New Art Officer - majority of costs recharged to Holmes Place.
4.40	Planning policy – publicity	How do we publicise the positive issues on planning	Press releases, RD Matters articles, leaflets, heritage and design awards, web site, monthly appeals bulletin

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4.44	Food hygiene contractors	Increase in Budget	In 2002/03 part of this contract was funded from salary savings linked to a specific vacancy. Now budget created for the contract
4.45	Public Conveniences – contract cleaning	Increase in Budget	Prices under the current contract are fixed until October 2003, when it will be retendered or extended. The cost is expected to increase under the new contract.
4.46	Hackney Carriage – car allowances	Increase in Budget	New post of Enforcement Officer
4.47	Tip clearances	Increase in Budget	To meet new legislation covering disposal of fridges and other electrical goods.
4.48	Waste collection – car allowances	Increase in Budget	Budget is now based on both recycling officers receiving allowance.
4.50	Depot security contractor	Increase in Budget	The security has been increased from a night watchman who used to patrol the Depot twice nightly to 24 hour CCTV linked to a security centre.
4.51	Highways – signage & equipment	Increase in Budget	This budget covers street and footpath lighting. Vandalism and light failures appear to be on the increase.
4.53	Energy Advice centre	What is it	The Essex Energy Efficiency Advice Centre funded by Government through The Energy Saving Trust and the Carbon Trust (non profit making partnerships between Government and the private sector). They offer free advice to all home occupiers. The budget was set up for additional publicity material.
4.55	HB admin – Expenses and equipment tools and materials	Increase in Budget	Equipment needed for additional staff and procedure manuals following the introduction of the Verification Framework.

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4.56	Revenues investigation section – Equipment and professional advice	Increase in Budget	Joined Anti- Fraud Network and increase in subscription to CIPFA's Better Governance Forum.
4.59	Window cleaning	Increase in Budget	The contract has recently been retendered and lowest bid accepted. The contact is split between Rayleigh and Rochford, but only the Rochford budget has been increased. This also includes window cleaning at the depot, and the CAB and Day Centre at Back Lane The new contract contains a much clearer explanation of the service/frequency expected, with a formal contract review after 6 months.
4.62	Staff reward scheme	Why no budget	This is expected to come out of salary savings.
4.64	Computer consumables	What are they	Printer toners
4.2	Paragraph 3.2	What is the additional direct grant payable to the Authority	Draft Announcement = £327,603
4.6	Paragraph 5.2-3	Are concessionary fares and recycling government initiatives – or are they council decisions	Concessionary Fare = Government scheme Recycling = Government targets
4.6	Paragraph 5.5	What figures are involved – reserves available and what will be left.	See Appendix D General Fund statement
4.25	Newspaper	Is it self-sufficient	Paper supported by Holmes Place and expenditure can only be incurred if income available.
4.25	Queens Jubilee	Was the £2,900 all spent	Yes.
4.45	Public Health – Sewers & Ditch Clearance	With the climate changes and recurring flooding – is the increase to £25,000 sufficient	Currently there are other schemes possible. This is a best estimate identifying priority items. It will be continually monitored and may be increased at revised estimate time next year if necessary.
4.47	Dog Fouling Land Act	As there is no budget for this year or next – is this still being enforced.	The Act has been adopted but is not being enforced. The cost of bins is being met from a capital budget.

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4.50	Depot Security Contractors	Is this shared with other users or covered within their rent?	This is our contribution to Stephenson's for the cost of providing 24 hour CCTV security to the whole area.
4.55	VF Income	Is the grant covering the cost of VF?	No
4.56	WIBS	What is this?	<p>Weekly income benefit saving – related to the amount of fraud identified by the authority and includes other reward schemes introduced recently</p> <p>For every successful Formal Caution, the Council will be awarded £1,000. The Administrative Penalty includes 30% of the total overpayment which is retained by the Council, once the overpayment has been repaid.</p> <p>For Prosecutions: the Council receives £1,000 for the filing of the case at court. A further £1,000 is received for the court hearing. The final £1,000 is paid for a conviction.</p>
		Does it cover all fraud?	No
4.58	Photocopying paper	Is it recycled paper	Yes
4.78	Capital grant – IS/IT	Is this grant enough?	No, it can only fund part of the programme. We are only spending up to this amount, but this only pays for equipment and software. There will be running costs which have been discussed when the capital programme has been reported.

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4.44	Contaminated Land	<p>When was this introduced?</p> <p>What value is there to the Council?</p> <p>Will the Council receive any money back?</p>	<p>July 2001.</p> <p>It enables the authority to identify and remove unacceptable risks to human health and the environment and to seek to bring damaged land back into beneficial use. The regime ensures that all the problems resulting from contamination of land are handled as part to the same process.</p> <p>Central Government (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions) originally stated that they would make available additional resources through the SSA process for the contaminated land regime.</p> <p>Approximately £21m a year is made available to councils for site remediation and peripheral works through the Supplementary Credit Approval Programme</p> <p>The majority of the budget is allocated to salary costs for a Research Officer.</p>
4.27	Employee costs Pension	Why 16% increase?	RDC pays ECC in line with the requirements of the Actuaries to the Fund. Additional contributions are required as there are projected deficits on the Fund.
4.28	Business Rates - Training	Why 700% increase?	To provide training in new NNDR legislation.
4.30	Cost of Elections £50,000 (2002/03)	Why so high with approx 8 uncontested seats?	Estimate for next year has been reduced to £25,000. Money unused from this year will be carried forward.
4.30	National Register Initiatives	what are they?	Central Government asked Councils to make a provision for the work relating to a national electoral register as part of the E-government agenda.

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4.31	Emergency Planning	Is it enough?	This is a best estimate based on past history. It will be continually monitored and may be increased at revised estimate time next year if necessary.
4.34	Leisure Premises - Increased Insurance.	Why so high?	This reflects the general increase in property insurance costs last year and expected for 2003/04. Any increases will be from a current low base.
4.41	Environmental Initiatives –	why £75,000 for Deferred Charges?	Compulsory Purchase Order for 37-39 West Street. This occurs where the Council invests in capital but does not obtain a capital asset.
4.46	Hackney Carriage Car Allowances	83% increase why? whose allowance is it?	New post of Enforcement Officer
4.47	Street Cleansing - Tip Clearance	122% increase why? what is tip clearance?	Largely due to the new legislation concerning the disposal of fridges/freezers. As well as a substantial rise in the cost of disposal per item, the demand for our collection service has increased. New legislation is due in 2003/04 covering the disposal of electrical items
4.59	Office Accommodation - repairs, alteration and maintainence	Doubled from 2001/02 to 2002/03, why £45,000 in 2003/04?	This includes a provision for responsive repairs and planned programme including health & safety testing and external decoration for 2003/04.
4.64	Computer Services Supplies & Services - expenses	What are these and why so high?	This covers general expenses including mileage and attendance at meetings. Increased as GIS Officer post no longer vacant.
	Contract Payment	up 20% why?	To cover the cost of additions to the contract as new software and hardware is purchased , for example as part of the e-Government strategy
	Computer Consumables	41% increase why?	2002/03 was the first year this budget was set. We have now been able to set a more realistic budget based on previous year (£11,447) and current year usage.
4.65	Legal Services - professional fees	up 33% why?	Lawyers practising certificates have doubled in cost.

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4.67	Car Parks- Approach	Why have weekly tickets been discontinued?	Season ticket sales are controlled to fit capacity. Where weekly tickets are sold and users find no spaces they will park in season ticket holders spaces causing problems.
4.70	Public Footpaths - Ancient Woodland bk	Why withdrawn?	This will be reinstated at £10
4.73	Sports pitches increase	Why increase of 5%?	Contractor has not requested an increase for the last 2 years.
4.76	Miscellaneous items - Rayleigh & Rochford booklets	Why withdrawn?	This will be reinstated.
4.86	Wardened Services - Heating	Why such a large increase?	Contract for the supply of gas increased by 60%