

# MEPAL PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs Karen Peck, email: [clerk@mepalparish.org](mailto:clerk@mepalparish.org)

Chairman: Mrs Lorna Williams

Website: [www.mepalparish.org](http://www.mepalparish.org)

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## **Mepal Parish Council Statement in relation to the budget/ precept in the Mepal Parish 2026-27**

For the financial year running from 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2027, Mepal Parish Council has requested an increase in its precept from East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) of £385, which, due to a slight increase in tax base will result in no increase to individual bands.

### **What is a Precept?**

The Precept is money that a Parish Council requests from their District Council to meet their budget requirements in the next Financial Year. Parish Councils do not receive any direct funding from central government and rely on their precept plus any other income they generate from services or facilities they provide. The Parish Council precept is part of the Council Tax and is collected from households via their Council Tax payments. The annual precept figure decided on by the Parish Council is sent to the East Cambridgeshire District Council who divide it up based on the Council Tax band of each property within the Mepal parish. If the precept requested remains the same year on year, when the number of households in the parish increases, the amount of money the Parish Council asks for is divided by more houses and therefore the amount each property pays will reduce.

### **What is the Tax Base?**

In simple terms the "tax base" is the number of Band D equivalent dwellings in a local authority area. This is calculated by looking at the number of houses in all bands, adjusting for discounts and exemptions and applying a proportion relative to Band D across all eight bands. This then gives a single tax base figure that is given to each Parish Council to be able to calculate what Precept to apply for each year. The estimated figure provided to the Parish Council for 2026/27 is £392.5, which is a 0.6% increase on last year's tax base.

### **Who Are Mepal Parish Council?**

At the date of issue of this statement, Mepal Parish Council has 5 out of a possible 7 councillors, (all councillors are unpaid), a part time salaried clerk and a part time salaried caretaker and grounds maintenance officer. For more information on the parish council and to see who your councillors are please visit Mepal Parish Councillors - Mepal Parish Council.

### **How is the Precept Amount Determined?**

The Parish Council has statutory obligations to maintain the assets it owns and so every year a budget is created based on the financial circumstances visible at the time, which is then approved and minuted during one of its public meetings. This budget helps the Parish Council to calculate the precept request it submits to ECDC in January before the end of the financial year, 31st March 2026. The budget sets out the areas in which the Parish Council plans to spend money for the upcoming financial year and is determined by looking at historical costs of maintenance of the assets owned by the Parish Council as well as judgement as to areas of the council owned property and assets that are likely to need more or less money spent on them the following year. The council will also look at the projects it plans to complete in the next financial year and budget for those. The precept is the only stable income that the parish council receives, and the purpose of this income is to cover the day to day running of the parish and the annual maintenance of Parish Council assets.

If the Parish Council wish to undertake any special projects outside of the normal maintenance and running costs, this is covered by any 'earmarked reserves' that are being held, any Community Infrastructure Levy payments from house developers (CIL), any other grants applied for or by community fundraising. It has been necessary to set the precept to rebuild the earmarked reserves that have been spent on projects over the last five years. To see the provisional budget for the next financial year (26/27) please visit Parish Council Finance - Mepal Parish Council on the website.

### **Why has the Precept Increased?**

The Parish Council has made the decision to only increase the precept in line with the increase in tax base to continue to re-build the level of reserves to meet continued requirements for additional maintenance on mature tree stocks and ensure we can continue to maintain the village assets.

We have an ageing playpark, and so last year as phase 1 of a refurbishment project, Councillors used a grant from Mick George to cover the costs of replacing faulty equipment, refurbishing the basketball hoop and court, and

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installing an outdoor table tennis table. We will look to obtain further grant funding in future to replace other old equipment to continue to enhance the area.

In addition, Mepal has no predicted CIL money for 2026/27 but has managed to cover increases in insurance and higher staff costs due to the increase in employers national insurance without increasing the precept further. We have also agreed to fund all S137 applied for.

## **What Have the Parish Council Been Spending Your Money On?**

A full report and break down of the money spent for the last financial year will be made public via the Parish Council website when the Parish Council closes its accounts for the financial year ending 31st March 2026 after the accounts have been signed off by the independent accountant and the independent auditor.

The spending for each month is found in the minutes of each council meeting (please go to Parish Council/ Meetings and select the relevant minutes). In addition to the points made above, here is an overview of the major costs that have been incurred and projects that have been completed in the last year:

- Insurance costs for the assets
- Continued annual maintenance work to Brangehill Drove, the playpark and the Recreation Field and vandalism and contributions to the enhancements to the play park on the recreation field.
- Maintenance costs of the Pavilion building (utilities, annual maintenance and repair costs)
- Grass cutting of the recreation field and verges and greens
- Maintaining a compliant website and maintaining up-to-date accountancy and booking software
- Grants to community Groups under Section 137 powers

Unlike many other Parish Councils of a similar size, we have a lot of Parish Council managed assets that are not run by charitable community groups. We also have contractual obligations in relation to the original grant funding to build the Pavilion that run until August 2026. The utilities costs of the Pavilion continue to increase, and our annual budget must cover this.

We are fortunate to have a football club with enough teams to be able to cover the annual lease costs, and additional pavilion use is set at a price equal to the cost of the hire in terms of utility use. We also have a number of annual grant applications under the Section 137 funding, which must be met using the Precept; this is unusual for a Parish Council the size of Mepal, and we have approved grant applications and donations at £1485 for the 2026/27 period.

## **Conclusion**

The Parish Council has written this statement to give an insight as to how the amount of the precept applied for is calculated, and how the budget for the forthcoming financial year is set. The Parish Council recognizes that not all the decisions it makes will please every resident of the Parish, but it does its best to provide as much as possible to everyone whilst maintaining its current assets to a reasonable standard. The Parish Council would also like to encourage residents to view the website regularly, to attend meetings to hear what is being discussed and then make a positive input to the process by voicing ideas, concerns, and opinions during the public participation section. The Parish Council would also like to remind residents that there are currently Parish Councillor vacancies should anyone like to make a positive impact on the parish we all live in.

**Lorna Williams, Chairman and Finance Working Group Representative, January 2026**