



## Clerk Report – Warden & Concurrent Services Review by DBC Sept 2024

### Council Actions Required (agenda items)

- To consider the clerks completion of the attached schedule and to make any amendments prior to submission to Dacorum Borough Council

### Background

NMPC have received grants from DBC for several years to support the warden role and the provision of concurrent services.

Concurrent services include allotments, bus shelters, public seats, village halls, grass cutting, closed churchyards, street cleaning, litter bins, playgrounds, playing fields and footway lighting.

I have been unable to obtain any service level agreement from DBC to explain exactly what this grant applies to in relation to our parish. Historically it appears that this grant covered the warden's salary plus an additional sum as surplus to cover the concurrent services. Over the last few years NMPC have brought the wardens salary up in line with comparable roles locally and this surplus is now minimal.

	Warden Grant	Concurrent Services Grant
2022/23	£8594.31	£1468.39
2023/24	£9649 (increased by DBC 5.92%)	£1468.39

<b>Total proposed loss at 50%</b>	£5285 per annum.	Potential impact per band D property (5285/1327) = £3.98 increase
<b>Total proposed loss at 100%</b>	£10571per annum.	Potential impact per band D property (10571/1327) = £7.96 increase

Our total precept demand last year was **£38897** (this was after NMPC committed use of reserves at £1050).

Our precept breakdown last year was £30.41 per band D property.

It should be noted that over previous years we have also lost the council tax support grant of £371 per annum.

### Information from DBC

As part of the approval of its 2024/25 budget, Dacorum Borough Council identified a savings requirement of £3.9m over the next four years. This is a challenging target, which requires the council to look at all areas of income and expenditure to identify possible savings. This includes the grants we make to parish and town councils.

Dacorum pays around £0.25m to parish and town councils in the borough to support the delivery of warden services and concurrent services, such as grounds maintenance. These are activities valued by local people and we recognise the important role parish and town councils currently have in their delivery. Since 2013-14, government grants have reduced by over 57% in cash terms, the 2013-14 the total core government grants totalled £9.2m, and in 2024-25, the Dacorum core grant is circa £4m.

In this same period of time, inflation (Cumulative Consumer price index), has increased Council costs on average by 38% (ONS Annual data 2013-2024) providing additional expenditure pressures. In this increasingly challenging financial environment, it is necessary to assess all Council income and expenditure. The purpose of this request is to help Dacorum better understand the services supported by the warden and concurrent service grants paid over to parish and town councils. Dacorum also wants to understand the implications for service delivery were these grants to reduce or cease.

### Considerations & Clerk Recommendations

Any reduction, whether in full or in part will impact on our residents as we will have no option but to fund this loss via our own precept demand. NMPC have always budgeted to keep any increase to the minimum, cutting costs wherever possible, without impacting actions, to achieve this.

Our warden works hard to keep our parish safe, neat and tidy. The role supplements the under resourced and overstretched DBC and HCC roles and makes a tangible difference to the appearance of Nash Mills. It is unclear yet whether Dacorum Borough Council will be increasing their proportion of the council for the coming year.

It would be prudent for NMPC to clearly communicate the reasons behind any potential increase to the parish precept as it is unlikely that costs can be cut from any other areas.

Nikki Bugden  
Clerk & RFO  
29/8/2024

DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL / TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL WARDEN AND CONCURRENT SERVICES REVIEW

Parish:  
Form completed by:  
Position:  
Date:

Services	Information requested	Parish/ Town Council response	Annual cost/ (Income) (£)	Expected impact on service if Warden and Concurrent Service grants from Dacorum Borough Council were reduced by 50%	Expected impact on service if Warden and Concurrent Service grants from Dacorum Borough Council were to cease.
<b>Warden Services</b>					
Warden Services	Please provide the following details for parish warden services delivered: * Whether warden services are delivered by a salaried employee or by an external contractor * Nature and frequency of activities undertaken	We employ a warden on PT hours for 16 hours per week	£11,811	NMPC would have 2 choices . Option 1 Reduce the warden hours and push all duties back to DBC to clean and maintain their own land. Option 2 increase precept by nearly £6000	NMPC would have 2 choices. Option One , Stop the warden service, impacting on the cleanliness and safety within the parish. The duties would be passed back to DBC to maintain and inspect the land owned by them. The second option would be to increase our precept by over £11000 which is an increase of over 25%
<b>Concurrent Services</b>					
Cemeteries and Churchyards	Please provide a list of cemeteries / churchyards being maintained, and for each please detail: * Location / address of the churchyard * Size of the churchyard * Nature and frequency of activities undertaken * Confirmation that the cemeteries are closed	None			
Noticeboards	Please provide detail as to the number of noticeboards that are being maintained including for each: * Nature and frequency of activities being undertaken * Specific detail as to the location / address of the noticeboard * Details of who owns the noticeboard	Noticeboard held at the Denes, owned by NMPC, however we also maintain a second community noticeboard on Highbams		see above	see above
Open and Recreational Spaces, Gardens, Playing Fields	Please provide a list of open spaces, recreation areas, gardens etc., and for each please detail: * Location / address * Nature and frequency of maintenance activities being undertaken * Details of ownership (who owns the land)	We lease a playpark on Bunkers Lane. We maintain a garden at the Denes (land owned by DBC), for which we pay DBC for grass cutting. Warden litter picks and reports all fly tipping at Bunkers Park (park partly in parish but owned by DBC), warden conducts all daily inspections of the playpark and collects all refuse. Warden also undertakes all small repairs on this equipment. These items receive daily visits for litter collection and safety checks. Costs are currently included under warden salary but the additional grass cutting of £1300 is listed separately. This would be increased should we have to employ additional safety checks at approx £100 per visit to the park.	£1,300	see above	see above
Public Halls	Please provide a list of public halls and spaces and for each please detail: * Location / address * Who owns the hall * Facilities and services available * Who the hall is available to / used by * Any income received back for the use of the hall (please provide specific detail as to charging structures, annual income etc.)	None			
Grounds Maintenance and Grass Cutting	Please provide detail of any grounds maintenance, grass cutting or other similar work other than that detailed in the open spaces section above including specific detail as to: * Location / address of the area being maintained * Size of the area being maintained * Nature and frequency of work undertaken * Details of ownership (who owns the land)	see above			
Other	Please provide detail of any other services provided that are not included in the above; please provide as much background as possible as to nature of activities undertaken, frequency, location etc.	Warden collects refuse and reports fly tipping across Nash Mills. Warden sorts refuse at The Denes and Gade Tower. Warden checks the defibrillator at the Denes. Warden litter picks throughout the parish. Warden grits outside the senior living accommodation next to the Denes and grits at The Denes, Warden paints and maintains all 4 'welcome to Nash Mills Signs'. Warden maintains the memorial garden at Gade Tower (land owned by DBC)	see above	see above	see above

**Any other comments:**  
not included above that may be

The duties undertaken by our warden ensures that Nash Mills remains a clean and well-maintained parish. Many of the duties that he undertakes are not the statutory responsibility of the parish as they are undertaken on DBC or HCC land. With the grant we have been able to ensure that we utilise his time for the benefit of all residents. His actions also benefit the DBC teams who have no option but to neglect their duties in the areas that he covers due to their lack of resourcing.

The warden supports the DBC teams in their actions and supports the service that they provide. Should NMPC be unable to afford to employ a warden the duties will remain the responsibility of the over worked and under resourced DBC teams. There appears to be no capacity for the DBC teams to take on additional duties.

In our opinion it is unfair for DBC to consider the leverage gained via the parish precept raising powers to pass any additional costs on to residents. The reality is that residents will view this as a parish tax when it is DBC who are looking at alternative ways to fund their expenditure or to cut services that our residents pay their council tax to fund.