

MUSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: B Williamson, High Hall, West Ayton, YO13 9HP.

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Closed Extra Ordinary Meeting of Muston Parish Council to discuss the setting of the Parish Precept for 2026 – 2027 on Tuesday 4th November 2025.

Apologies: Cllr, J Brigham, Cllr, J McClusky.

Present: Cllr. G Owen, Cllr. G Barnett, Cllr. D Newland, Cllr. D Frodin, Cllr. F Warters, Mrs B Williamson (Clerk).

Clerk informed councillors that North Yorkshire Council will cease to pay the parish council the annual payment of £3713.17 known as the Model Agreement from April 2026. This payment has been made since 1973 and allocated for specific purposes. £535 towards grass cutting, £467.20 for cutting verges at junctions, £1314.19 for cutting the grass in burial grounds (Muston), £259.03 for seat / bench maintenance, £189.10 for shelter maintenance, £535.53 towards the church clock service, £412 for administration. From April 2026 the only payment towards any of these areas will be for grass cutting amounting to £535.53. All other payments will cease resulting in a shortfall of £3177.64 in the Parish Council income. Decisions will need to be made if these services are to continue within the village and if so, how will they be paid for. North Yorkshire Council have informed MPC the precept will be £10500 if they do not request an increase.

Last year's expenditure for the council amounted to £17000 which included grass cutting, all fees, maintenance, including pond work, flaying, tree conservation & safety work, administration and any issues that arose during the year that required rectification. The council is required to keep in reserve the amount of the previous year's expenditure. There is increased pressure on the parish council to take responsibility for additional tasks in order retain the high standards expected by Muston residents.

Lengthy discussion on how any possible savings could be made. This was seen as difficult to achieve as expenditure is already closely monitored, regular maintenance tours are undertaken to ensure standards are retained and keep abreast of any issues which has proved cost effective. Agreement reached with contractor to monitor grass cutting needs & any remedial work. It was thought residents would prefer to maintain the current high visual standards of the village rather than allowing the public areas to deteriorate. No further benches or memorial trees will be accepted in the village as maintenance costs falls onto the council which they cannot afford. One major area of financial saving would be reducing or ceasing the contribution to grass cutting in the church grounds and servicing of the church clock amounting to approximately £1800, as the parish council will no longer receive any assistance towards this. The council has no information on how much the cutting of the grounds cost. This was identified as the one major area for financial saving. Councillors all in agreement. Clerk requested to inform the church of no future payment.

Currently the parish council has spent £10900 in this financial year. With four months left spending should not exceed £5749 in order not to exceed last year's expenditure. This will be a

challenge as there are still annual outstanding fees to be made and maintenance costs to be paid. There will be no additional expenditure.

Examples circulated on the impact of various increases in the precept & how they would affect different bands of properties. Lengthy discussions.

All councillors agreed there would have to be an increase in the precept for the council to remain financially solvent and maintain current standards. The alternative is to cease maintenance needs and drastically reduce grass cutting in the village. Cllr. Warters proposed to increase the precept by 4.70%, seconded by Cllr. Barnett. Unanimously supported by all the councillors as there is no other option to maintain Muston's current standards and remain legally compliant. Agreed. Clerk will notify NY Finance for a request of £11250 for the annual precept. No money will be donated towards the church grounds grass cutting and clock service. All spending will be under regular review and expenditure limited.

It was noted that Muston in Bloom's continued voluntary efforts positively contribute to the major visual impact in Muston which is greatly appreciated. Thanks to all the volunteers as there is no possibility that the council could financially pay a contractor to undertake this work. It was felt that in future it was possible that residents would be asked to assist with some maintenance tasks around the village like the recent pond restoration and maintenance.

It is a difficult economic climate for everyone, and residents will be kept informed of any developments as they arise.

Meeting closed @ 8.45