



## COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Highfield Park Office  
Hill End Lane  
St Albans  
Hertfordshire AL4 0RA

Colney Heath Village Office  
83 High Street  
Colney Heath  
Hertfordshire AL4 0NS

Tel: 01727 825314 Email: [clerk@colneyheathparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@colneyheathparishcouncil.gov.uk)

15<sup>th</sup> April 2021

### **RE: Freedom of Information Act 2000**

### **Colney Heath Parish Council – Increase in Precept 2021/22**

I am replying to you in response to your email received 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021 and a further email received 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021 which have been treated as Freedom of Information requests.

The questions you asked are addressed with responses as follows:

#### **Your request:**

I have just received my council tax demand, can you please explain to me why your charges have gone up by so much, particularly at a time when many peoples incomes have shrunk?

#### **Our response:**

The Colney Heath Parish Council Precept demand not a decision the Council made lightly but unfortunately the pandemic adversely affected the finances of St Albans District Council and Parish Councils were notified of a reduction in the District Council collection rate for Council Tax and the increase in empty properties which had to be reviewed and considered.

I attach the questions in Appendix 1 asked by the Parish Council Chairman to the St Albans District Council Portfolio Holder for your information.

The decision made by the Parish Council was not reduce services across the Parish.

#### **Your request:**

Do I have the option to opt out? It is totally irresponsible of the Council to increase its charges by an unacceptable amount, and they should all resign.

#### **Our response:**

You do not have the choice to opt out of payment of stated liability for Council Tax. There is a statutory regulations and your liability for this is not contingent upon either your consent or the existence of a contractual relationship with the Council.

#### **Your request:**

As the Council has adopted a policy of paying for what we use and not paying for what we do not use, reference Garden Waste paperwork, I presume that, as I do not use any of the services you allegedly provide, I assume that I do not need contribute to the money you waste.



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### Our response:

The Parish Council do not charge individually for services. Garden Waste collection is a service introduced by the St Albans District Council from Monday 5 July. Most Councils in England charge for this service. A letter explaining the charges was included with the Council Tax pack and bill or further information on this service can be found at the following link: [www.stalbans.gov.uk/garden-waste-subscription-service](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/garden-waste-subscription-service)

### Your request:

By the way why are the office no longer in Colney Heath? The building should be sold, and the money used to pay for services that you inflict in us.

### Our response:

The Council continues to maintain an office and presence in Colney Heath Village with its small office at 83 High Street, Colney Heath AL4 0NS. The Parish Council do not own the building that the office is in. The office has remained closed during the pandemic but when safe to do potentially after 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021 the office will be open, and appointments can be booked with the Clerk by calling the office on 01727 825314 or emailing [clerk@colneyheathparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@colneyheathparishcouncil.gov.uk)

I hope this sufficiently addresses your questions.

Yours sincerely,

**Lisa Chaplin LCGI PSLCC CPFA CiLCA**  
**Clerk to the Council**  
**For and on behalf of**  
**Colney Heath Parish Council**



## **Appendix 1**

### **St Albans Council 03 December 2022 Public question**

#### **To the Resources Portfolio Holder**

Please could the portfolio holder explain why there was no prior consultation by the District Council before reducing Parish Councils' total income by almost 3.5% for 2021/22 and the reasons behind the decision?

Peter Cook  
Chair 2020/21

#### **Answer**

"The Council is not stopping parishes from claiming any particular total sum as income in their precept.

But the amount individual bill payers would have to pay towards that precept would go up, other things being equal, because:

(a) due to Covid we expect the Council Tax collection rate to drop; and

(b) due to Covid there are likely to be more people who do not pay as much Council Tax because they are now claiming Council Tax Support.

This is I'm afraid, the situation for the District, the County Council and the Police Commissioner too."

#### **Supplementary Question**

Thank you Madam Mayor and Councillor Young for your answer.

At last week's Parish Council meeting Members confirmed their disappointment at the lack of notice of the reduction in the tax base as we had previously carefully completed our budget, as I am sure other parishes did.

The drop in collection rate does not explain the dramatic differences in the overall percentage changes between parishes or how, under delegated authority, the Council Tax Base was arrived at. There seems no rhyme or reason for the larger overall percentage reductions in London Colney and Colney Heath.

Please could you explain why it appears the Council targeted the Colneys to be the biggest losers? Thank you

#### **Response**

"I would say that this is a mechanical calculation which has resulted in those numbers which Councillor Cook has mentioned.

There is no particular calculation that has been made for Colney Heath; it's the same for all Parish Councils, the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

So it's a function of the fact that we think we are going to collect less and we will be providing more Council Tax support to households as a result of Covid. So to keep the same amount of money, people will have to pay a little bit more.

I'm very happy to go through the mechanics of the calculation with Councillor Cook. I assure him that it's the same for everyone."