



3rd February 2026

Mole Valley District Council – Community Governance Review Stage Two.

Q&A Stage Two: To assist residents in Bookham

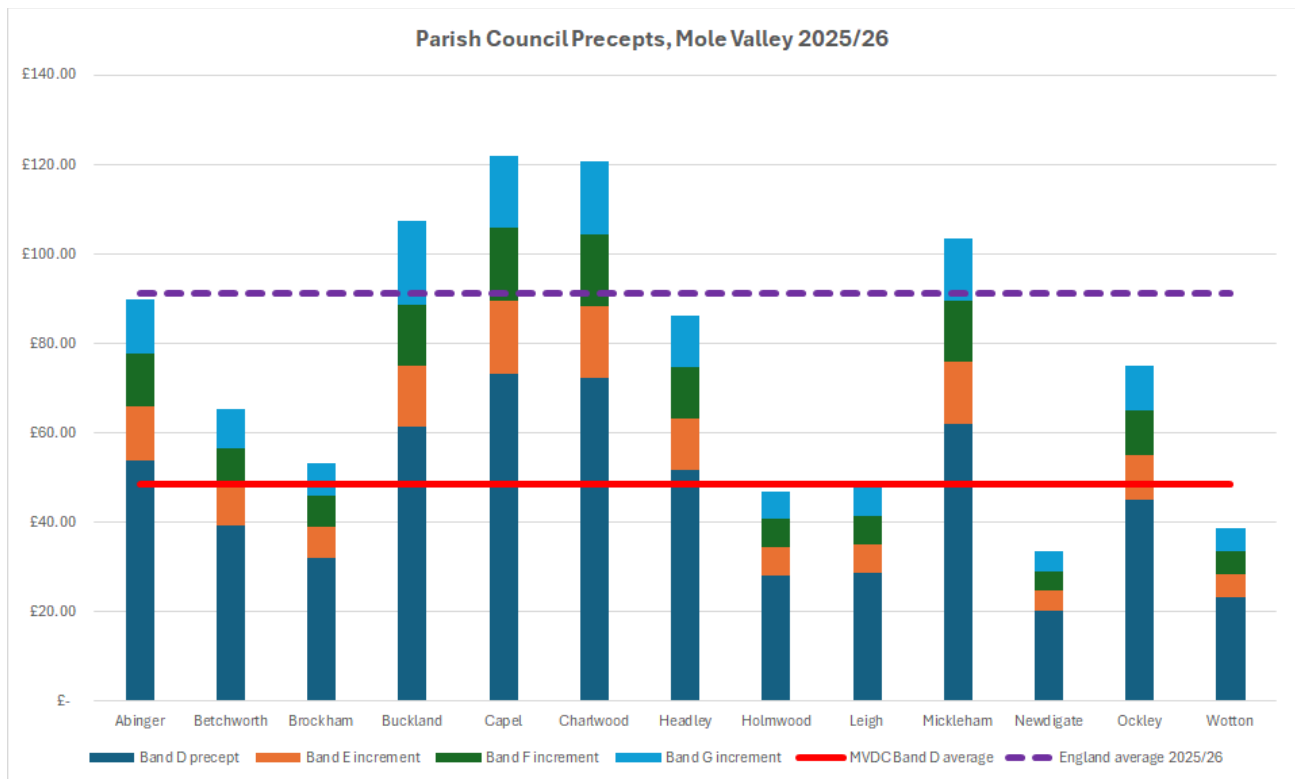
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What might it cost?

One indicator is the charges levied by existing Parish Councils in Mole Valley. Precepts (the taxes that a Parish Council can collect) are compared in terms of the level for a home within the Band D rateable value. The graph compares the 2025/26 precepts of the Parish Councils within Mole Valley – individually (the columns), the average (the red line) and contrasts against the average for England (the purple dashed line).

Whilst Mole Valley District Council has quoted an average Band D precept of £48.56 (the red line), the Band D precept rises to £73.26 in two parishes which provide more services at parish level. These band D levels of precept are shown in dark blue in the graph. However, the majority of homes in the Bookhams fall into higher bands; the effect of higher banding in these Parish Councils is:

Rate Band	Number of parishes where this Band's precept exceeds the Band D average?	What is the highest level of precept for this Band?	Colour showing additional precept in graph
E	7 of 13	£89.54	Orange
F	8 of 13	£105.82	Green
G	9 of 13	£122.10	Light blue



Naturally, the levels of precept relate to the services being provided through the Parish Council:

- The Parish Councils which provide the broadest range of services have the higher levels of precept. This may be mitigated to some extent where the Parish Council has other revenue earning opportunities, such as from venue hire.
- The Parish Councils with the lowest levels of precept provide the narrowest range of services.

Another indicator is the average level of precept in England across all Parish Councils which is £91.22 for 2025/26 [source: National Association of Local Councils]. Whilst the average Band D precept in Mole Valley is currently 53% of this level (the purple line), there is no guarantee that it will stay at this level.

Service Transfer

If we have a new Parish Council which takes on services previously provided by the District Council will the Council Taxes charged by the District Council or its successor reduce proportionally?

No.

How much of a Parish Council's budget is spent on staffing?

Based on the published statutory returns for the year 2024/25 from 11 of the Parish Councils in Mole Valley, this ranges between 19% and 64% with an average of 42%. It depends in part on how services are delivered. What is the difference between a Residents Association and a Parish Council?

Parish Council ('PC')	Residents Association ('RA')
Parish councillors are elected by the local community.	BRA Directors are elected by BRA members. Active Committee Members are volunteers, some selected from other already established groups. They are often nominated for their expertise in an area.
A PC is a statutory local authority with legal powers granted under Acts of Parliament. The powers are limited (e.g. managing allotments, managing/ providing certain services and being consulted on local planning matters). PCs are empowered to levy a precept to fund its activities and make legally binding decisions within the limits of its powers for its community.	An RA has no legal authority or power to enforce decisions or collect funds beyond voluntary contributions. It has no powers to make decisions for the community, but it has the ability to influence those that do. The new Local Government Structure will empower RAs to sit alongside PCs and other organisations to represent their communities as part of the new Neighbourhood Area Committees which will liaise/work with the new Unitary Authorities.

Parish Council ('PC')	Residents Association ('RA')
Funding is through the precept (part of the Council Tax) which all households must pay.	Funding is through voluntary contribution and grants.
A PC can own and manage community assets, which have been transferred to them, and provide a wide range of services, funded through the precept and any additional sources of income.	Community assets can be transferred or leased to community groups, e.g. SPACE and the new Youth and Community Centre. An RA can provide a wide range of services undertaken by volunteers and funded by membership fees and grants. Working with other community groups enables a RA to focus on advocacy and community support.
A PC is formally recognised by higher tiers of government and statutory agencies, giving it a right to be consulted in local decision-making and respond on behalf of the community.	While RAs do not have the same legal status they can lobby, influence and advocate for residents in the same way as a PC.
A PC is responsible for expenditure of Neighbourhood CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) raised from new developments within its area.	An RA can apply for CIL grants to fund community projects, but it does not manage the Neighbourhood CIL. It can also propose items for the Council/ Unitary Authority to consider for funding when allocating CIL.
A PC may create professional ancillary statutory documents such as Neighbourhood Plans, Design Guidance etc, and support Emergency Plans. It is a statutory consultee on certain matters.	Typically, a separate organisation will create such documents, with the RA being a consultee.

What could a Parish Council do?

Parish Councils are consulted on planning applications in the same way as the Bookham Residents Association. In addition, a Parish Council may be responsible for a number of services including (if the current service provider agrees to delegate responsibility):

- allotments
- public clocks
- bus shelters
- community centres – noting that in the Bookhams such buildings are under lease to or are otherwise already managed by existing community groups so could not come under a new Parish Council without a transfer of responsibilities from those groups
- play areas and play equipment
- public toilets
- street cleaning

- grass cutting and maintenance of public area
- grants to help local organisations
- organise local festivals and celebrations

Who will set the budgets for any new Parish Councils?

The outgoing District Council will set the initial budgets for any new Parish Councils. However, as the process of setting the budgets will be during the Transition Period to the new Unitary Authority, there will be a statutory obligation to consult with the new Unitary Authority.

What does the Bookhams Residents' Association do now?

Funded by a voluntary contribution of £5, the BRA undertook in the last year:

Education and Youth work

- Worked with the BYCA & Bookham Youth Project incl. the new Howard of Effingham School; admission plans at the Great Bookham School and support for Polesden Lacey School
- Supporting the charity that runs the King George V Hall & Fields to deliver improvement works
- Supporting Youth Work and helping with the provision of the new Youth and Community Centre

Project Work

Local landmarks and infrastructure were installed and maintained:

- Weales clock
- The War Memorial
- Notice Boards
- Benches
- Working with MVDC the Lower Shott toilet block was refurbished, including a new water refill fountain and public artwork
- Working with MVDC on playground refurbishment including Lower Road Recreation Area and inclusion of new facilities
- Supporting the High St with improved Christmas Lights

Environmental

- Litter Picking
- 198 Helper attendances collected 193 bags of rubbish, from car wheel trims to clothing.

Trees & Planting

Through the BRA Tree Wardens:

- 66 new trees were planted in Bookham's verges and 35 in other locations
- 5,000 spring bulbs were planted at the Lower Shott and 200 bulbs at The Garstons' triangle
- And helped publicise SCC's mission to plant 1.2 million trees.

Blue Hearts

Bookham is recognised as a national Blue Hearts award winning exemplar with around 90 Blue Heart areas improving biodiversity.

Community Safety and Police Liaison

- Keeping community safety in Bookham in the forefront of Police minds
- Offering practical advice on topics that residents can act on themselves

Planning Matters

- Reviewing all of Bookham's planning applications (170+ last year)
- Sending 40+ letters of representation of which over 80% were mirrored by MVDC's planners in their subsequent decisions
- Keeping a close eye on impacts from MVDC's Local Plan: Green Belt, Traffic, Ecology, Groundwater & Wastewater, Housing and protecting our Heritage
- Evaluating major developments such as the Preston Farm Planning Application – holding MVDC to account for granting outline permission despite it receiving 252 letters of objection
- Contributing to, and challenging where necessary, MVDC's approach to Planning in Bookham, such as the "Bookham Masterplan"

Keeping Residents informed, engaged and lobbying on their behalf including:

- Twice yearly Newsletters, equating to over 10,000 deliveries
- Notice Boards display around 3,000 leaflets a year
- A free online Event Calendar, for people to advertise community events on-line.
- Hosting Election hustings for the community
- 2,000+ people registered for our email service which ran 28 email campaigns last year.
- BRA website gets 9,000+ visitors viewing 46,000 pages of info.
- BRA has 800+ social media (Facebook) followers, is on NextDoor and posts to "I Live in Bookham" (8,000+ followers).
- The telephone message line and website "Contact Us" page handled 240 messages
- The Service Requests & Reporting Portal helps people to contact service deliverers: SCC, MVDC, Surrey Police, Surrey Fire and Rescue plus emergency flooding, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Norbury Park, National Trust.

Accountability

- The BRA is a company registered at Companies House - annual returns, accounts, and tax matters are submitted correctly
- BRA accounts are reviewed by a qualified Examiner
- A full account of activity is given at the AGM
- BRA Directors are elected on a rotation basis by BRA members at the AGM.

Why the accelerated timetable?

The background to the accelerated timing of the CGR is the transition to new Surrey Unitary Authorities. Mole Valley will come under the East Surrey Unitary Authority and MVDC will cease to exist.

The Council became aware from another Council progressing its Community Governance Review ('CGR') that the original timetable could impact implementation of or changes to Parish Councils, were they to be supported:

- If MVDC's CGR was concluded after March 2026, then this would be outside the period during which MVDC could unilaterally determine the outcome of future community governance.
- Were any changes to be enacted during the transition period to the new Unitary Authority, the legislation allows the new incoming authority to overturn or ignore any such enactment by the outgoing authority. This provision is to prevent predecessor councils from setting up Parish Councils without the input of successor councils.

The relevant Surrey (Structural Changes) Order 2026 to implement the transition to the new Surrey Unitary Authorities was laid before both houses of Parliament on 14th January 2026, the day after the Extraordinary Meeting. The Order must be debated and approved by both Houses of Parliament before it can become law, which may be in late March 2026.

So, it may be regarded now as a two-horse race between Stage 2 of the CGR being concluded at a meeting of the Council in w/c 9th March 2026 and the Surrey (Structural Changes) Order 2026 being enacted; if the latter concludes first, then MVDC may lose its power to establish Parish Councils without consulting the new Unitary Authority.

The Officer's report to Council noted the following risks in progressing this accelerated programme:

- Creating new Parish Councils may be seen as an action contrary to the Government's intention to create simpler structures.
- It may not be value for money given the long-term financial implications for residents.
- And it may not be in line with the Council's Best Value Duty.

Ward Voting

Within the wards where there is a vote on setting up a Parish Council or changing the boundary, how many votes will be required for a change?

No definitive number or percentage of the electorate has been quoted, nor was one discussed at the Extraordinary Meeting of 13/1/26.

If nothing happens now in the Bookhams, can there be another CGR later on?

It was noted at the Extraordinary Meeting that further opportunities to consider Parish Councils would arise, irrespective of Stage 2. A petition by residents can trigger one at any time; for an electorate the size of the Bookhams, a petition signed by a minimum of 10% of the electorate is required.