

How Brixton Parish Council ensures that the council delivers value for money

This statement outlines how value for money and continuous improvement is sought and delivered by Brixton Parish Council with specific regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public money and the Council's resources. Brixton Parish Council fully understands that its main source of income is the annual precept (taxpayers' money) and is publically accountable and responsible to provide value for money (VFM) being the optimal use of financial resources to achieve intended outcomes, not simply achieving the lowest initial price.

Brixton Parish Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders are reviewed annually and outline the financial rules regarding procurement at all levels. Financial rules and procedures protect community assets and aim to make the best use of public money. Standing Orders include guidelines for the purchasing and procurement of goods and services, including how tenders are invited.

Brixton Parish Council maintains an asset register listing all the assets it owns. This records the date and cost of acquisition, and a value for insurance purposes. To ensure value for money, consideration is given to the level of 'excess', or the initial sum of any claim that the Council is prepared to pay; this will ensure the Council is insuring significant losses and not small everyday minor losses.

Expenditure against the budget is reviewed on a quarterly basis. An independent nominated Councillor checks bank statements and payments on a quarterly basis. All payments are agreed at Brixton Parish Council's monthly meeting and cheques are authorised by two Councillors. A qualified internal auditor carries out a thorough audit annually. An external audit is also completed annually.

Economy: minimising the cost of resources used or required – *spending less*

The Clerk and Council, as far as reasonable and practical, seek competitive quotes for routine administration expenditure and secure the lowest (VFM) prices. Brixton Parish Council also works with other local Parish Councils to obtain economies of scale e.g. joint maintenance of permissive path Silverbridge Way linking the parishes of Brixton & Yealmpton. The Parish Council collaborates with other local organisations to fund new community facilities e.g. the Parish Council pays a third of the annual cost of the Brixton village website and contributed a third of the cost of two defibrillators. Positive feedback to the Parish Council has been given by users of these services and further constructive suggestions for continuous improvement for the Parish Council to consider/implement.

Efficiency: comparing output from goods or services and the resources to obtain them – *spending well*

During 2024 the Parish Council extended the periods to obtain better quality services and VFM when tendering for grass cutting and for maintenance of Silverbridge Way. Since September 2018 street sweeping/weeding, previously contracted out, is now done by a team of volunteers (Parish Councillors and residents) reducing costs and increasing community involvement and cohesion. The initial cost for tools and equipment was met by the Parish Council but has since been covered by successfully applying for a grant. The Council's annual insurance policy was again renewed on a LTA for three years from May 2025, thus ensuring no increase during a period of uncertainty.

Effectiveness: the relationship between the intended and actual results of public spending (outcomes) – *spending wisely*

Through its grant and donation programme Brixton Parish Council is able to achieve more by making grants to local charitable organisations promoting health and well being than by its own actions. These include The Samaritans, Citizens Advice, Ivybridge Ring & Ride, Dementia Friendly Parishes around the Yealm, Yealmpton & Brixton Community Friendship Project and Youth services. These local charities have been particularly important in supporting people throughout the COVID-19 crisis and Cost of Living Crisis.

To ensure that positive outcomes are achieved a Grant and Donation Policy is followed. Organisations in receipt of grant funding are invited to report at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council the services they provide for the benefit of the local community. This provides the Parish Council with valuable feedback about from users/residents.

Training of Councillors and the clerk is considered an important investment as it increases skills and knowledge for the benefit of the parish. The quarterly parish newsletter has achieved its intended results of keeping the parish well informed of local and county issues/news and obtaining feedback prior to Brixton Parish Council making key decisions. The 'Welcome Pack' brochure produced by the Parish Council has been replaced by putting all current local information on the Brixton Devon website.

Brixton Parish Council has a Business Contingency Plan, which is reviewed annually to ensure that BPC continue to provide functions / services in the event of any disruption by whatever cause.