

Freedom of Information Request 003/2025 Precept and Merger Petition Calculations

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 regarding Castle Cary Town Council's precept and any involvement by councillors or staff in calculating financial projections related to the proposed merger with Ansford Parish Council. During the petition process for the proposed merger of Castle Cary Town Council and Ansford Parish Council, it was claimed that Ansford residents would face an increase of £9 per month in their precept if the merger were to proceed. In relation to this claim, please provide information on:

- Whether any Castle Cary Town Council councillors or staff were involved in calculating or advising on this figure. No
- If so, please provide a full copy of the calculations used to arrive at this figure, including details of the council tax band used. N/A
- And copies of any related correspondence, including emails, letters, meeting notes, or messaging exchanges. N/A
- An estimate of the number of staff hours spent on this work, if applicable. N/A

I would also be grateful if you could provide the following:

- A table showing the precept charged by Castle Cary Town Council for each of the last ten financial years, including the percentage change from the previous year for each entry.

Year	Precept amount received by CCTC	%age change from previous year
2025/26	£257,906	+12.55%
2024/25	£229,142	+13.8%
2023/24	£201,350	+7.4%
2022/23	£187,500	+4.09%
2021/22	£180,134	+6.74%
2020/21	£168,765	+7.49%
2019/20	£157,000	+1.74%
2018/19	£154,311	+24.06%
2017/18	£124,380	+5.64%
2016/17	£117,744	+10.15%

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Precept	£157,000	£168,765 (+7.49%)	£180,134 (+6.74%)	£187,500 (+4.09%)	£201,350 (+7.4%)	£229,142 (+13.8%)	£257,906 (+12.55%)
Band D precept	£185.80	£200.84 (+8.29%)	£209.35 (+4.24%)	£225.22 (+7.58%)	£235.57 (+5.04%)	£262.40 (+10.92%)	£288.25 (+9.85%)
Tax base	£844.98	£840.31 (-0.55%)	£860.45 (+2.4%)	£832.51 (-3.25%)	£851.11 (+2.23%)	£873.24 (+2.6%)	£894.74 (+3.98%)

The link below provides more information about the precept calculations

<https://castle-cary.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Financing-the-Town-Council-2025.pdf>

The UK Government publishes comparative data on precepts charged by Town and Parish Councils. A link to this is available in the footnote¹ if needed. According to this data, Castle Cary ranks 41st out of 10,234 councils in England by the amount charged.

In relation to this:

- **Are Castle Cary Town Council councillors or staff aware of this ranking?** Yes
- **Have any discussions taken place regarding steps to reduce the financial burden on local taxpayers?** Yes, regular discussions take place at Full Council and Committee meetings and between budget holders and staff to look at efficiency/cost savings, income opportunities and partnership working.

Please note the following comments from Councillors:

Constantly discussing cost reductions at meetings

The precept is reviewed every year.

There are good reasons why our precept is relatively high. I have only heard one person complain about it... and I know a LOT of residents from a multitude of backgrounds

I have proposed ways of reducing this financial burden and highlighted the issues of disproportionate spending

Discussions frequently take place around the priorities of the town and how many listed and old buildings we have to maintain.

We are keen to protect the vibrancy of the town as we attract tourists and have an ever-growing population requiring varied facilities and services. Combined with a high number of Air B and B's and percentage of non-rate payers plus our close neighbours using our facilities our precept is necessarily higher than others. We are always looking at trying to reduce the financial burden on local tax payers but it is always going to be a balance

Of course! However with the responsibility of maintaining the amenities and infrastructure of a small Market Town, that acts as a hub for satellite villages and parishes, the financial burden falls on the shoulders of Castle Cary residents for the benefit of all users and is understandably high.