

Kewstoke Parish Council
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Chairman: Councillor Mr T Horry

Pre-Precept Report

It is customary that I write a report to accompany the precept options however this year I thought Councillors need to be aware and focussed on the situation and options.

Over the last few years we have gone along very nicely doing capital work paid for out of our revenue and grants. Most of the revenue work has been part of NSDC domain. Ours has been one off capital projects met out of years of savings.

With the demise of Local Government funding and NSDC's need to save massive amounts only the Parishes have the ability to raise any revenue out of precept.

The two paragraphs above have been in my last two years reports at this time so it is now clearly established that local government has entered "the wind of change" financially some may say it is gaining momentum.

Looking forward to the projection at the end of the year we will again dip into reserves, not that we did not expect to do so. Clearly the £4,000.00 to run the toilets is a heavy price but it at least is met by a large VAT return which will help us but this is the last year of a major Vat return. The £1,500.00 contingency I believe will go on legal fees attached to the new toilet project. We will spend over budget on the environment but we have over the year decided to do extra work not considered under last years budget. This is likely to happen most years but is usually balanced out with savings in other areas.

The extra capital over budget is for a new printer which we are considering. This is still in the discussion stage but it will need to be part of a proposal linking it to a website and newsletter.

I am reasonably comfortable with the present year and its likely outcome however we are entering a new phase of Local Government for the Parish and I think it would be unwise NOT to accept the changing situation which we will be in.

Our budgets now pay for many things which we did not do 7 years ago. The cost to the community is a doubling of the precept from £20,000 to £40,000

2014-2015

Looking forward to next year both income and expenditure needs to be examined as continuing to increase the precept to do services is eventually going to draw the ire of residents unless it is clearly to their benefit. This has been acceptable up to now but clearly the residents are not prepared to fund toilets. They are happy for us to keep the village hedgerows and grass neat and tidy.

Savings

The one area where we could possibly make an impact is street lighting by trying to change the system of payment and turn lights off at night. Some initial work is being undertaken at present however it may be the following year before implementation.

We have just upgraded the website and reduced the newsletter to two a year.
Can we produce it differently to save money?

Capital Projects are good for Parishioners and Councillors. We have done many in seven years but can we carry on. We still have a series of lights to do as well as perhaps sort out all the street lights of the village with a new contract

I am sure there are others that will be raised over the coming period.

Income

The income stream as a percentage to our spend is reducing year by year and here lies the problem.

The old chestnuts such as car parking incomes is not going to happen in the near future, we hope the toilet concession will break even the toilet service costs, but if anything it is likely to be a debit more than a credit.

Still the only possible income stream is the Toll Road and under the Localism Bill this is our best chance to consider the option again. NSDC need the revenue badly and so do we if visitors are to contribute to our well being of the area. The village is to be promoted more by the tourism departments linked to the Sand Bay Plan. If a working group does consider this again then it seems that this time it must come to a conclusion for implementation or “put out to grass” because it does clearly affect what the Parish could or not achieve.

The budgets for next year and coming years are only going one way which is up unless the Parish says no to more provision of services. It could be seen as double taxation but I doubt the powers that be are concerned about such an argument.

It might be more prudent to think outside the box than in it, as residents will likely look favourably on the trying than the non triers and after all it is our residents that are our concerns.

Colin