

Kewstoke Parish Council
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Chairman: Councillor Mr T Horry

**Report to go alongside the Power Point Presentation at the Precept Meeting of the
13-01- 2014**

I firstly refer you to my Pre-Precept report of which you all have a copy.

Nothing has changed since that report in fact following a meeting with Senior Members of NSDC it would appear things are to get worse and I doubt we will ever see the return to the level of services which have been supplied in the past

I am more convinced than ever that we are returning to an older style of Local Government where the main bodies will carry out their Statutory Obligations and the Smaller Authorities will prioritise and carry out the wishes of their communities. The problem comes on several fronts

1. Communities are totally disengaged from their Councils and in some respects they think are all overpaid wasters
2. The resources were never there and will never be there but the public seem to think there is not a problem because of the amount of council tax they pay
3. There is and never has been an understanding of the way Local Government is funded.

At the bottom of the pile is the poor Parish Council made up of genuine residents who give their time freely who will have to face the wrath of the local residents when the “penny finally drops”

I have left this section in from last year as I don't think much has changed except perhaps the situation is likely to get worse not better.

Looking at the year just ended we will be around the budget set but that budget was of course set to take money from reserves.

I indicated in the pre-precept report that the time has come where this practice has to stop and we need to look at balanced budgets.

I have looked very closely at the budget headings and re-adjusted them so we are more accurate but of course it does remove any spare capacity. The concentration has been on ways of saving money and planning for the future

Putting some (meat on the bone) with some headings

Street Lighting

This cost is rising every year and is perhaps a luxury with all night lights.

NSDC will help us to put timers on our lights, if this can happen, long term we can save money. It will be the following years we pick up the saving but we need to budget for the work this year

Newsletter

We have to purchase a new copier so it makes sense to consider one that will also print the newsletter. It is budgeted for in the 2013-14 year so there is no capital expense this year however an extra £300 has been added to the admin budget for extras which will be needed if we print ourselves. If we choose not to do so then we need to budget £1,200 for printing costs.

Board-walk

To renew the board walk completely would cost £20,000.00 so it makes sense to look at the weak points in the structure, after all it has been there for 10 years plus now.

It is one of those places which we must care for, particularly relating to safety.

The upright posts and the walked on planks are the most vulnerable and it is likely that over the

next 3 years we will have to replace most of the uprights and many of the foot planks. It is difficult to estimate but I suggest a figure of £2000.00 per year would be a good starter.

Crookes Lane Wall

This wall does not belong to us but it does protect our path. Until we have talked to the owner it is wrong for me to make a judgement in public but will add more at the meeting if necessary in private session.

Other Headings

Environment

It is not perceived to do any new work but to stick with the present situation. I have talked with our contractor who is keeping his prices the same and I have included all the extra work we took on last year in the budget. £8,000.00 covers this work alone.

Toilets

Here we have looked on two fronts.

1. £2000,00 budgeted in case there is an overspend on the building, conversion and legal side of the toilet project and £2,000.00 if the working figures for the year prove to be wrong.

Youth

Although unlikely, have added £500 if the youth club ever became a reality again however I am sure Councillors would look hard at any youth project.

Conclusion

I have this year given you some forward figures on the reality of the precept increases and where you are in the Parish League Table. Kewstoke is 8th in the list but of course you actually do things for your village. Perhaps Burrington who are near the bottom is an example of doing little and now face problems. My other Parish, Wick St Lawrence does little and is regularly criticised by its residents and even by- passed.

What you face is the dilemma:- move the precept up £2,000.00 which would make sense because it can be justified but unless we try and find other income streams the same position will be with us next year, more likely facing a bigger rise. Most probably the worry is the ability long term to maintain what we do now, let alone other projects.

Colin