

## **Kingsley Parish Council**

### **Parish Council Budget**

Many of you will have now received your Council Tax bills for the coming year. You will have seen that Kingsley Parish Council has been given an increase of 8.5% in its annual precept (the money allocated to the it by EHDC.)

This sounds a lot and the Parish Council regrets it has to ask for such an increase.

In practice, the increase gives the Parish Council an extra £1,000 this year and a total annual income of £13,500 from the precept. Although this is only an increase of about £4 per year for each household it is, nevertheless, an increase and so the question has to be answered why is it necessary?

Over the past three years the Parish Council has spent between £1,600 and £2,750 more than it has received. This has been possible by dipping into reserves (money in the bank). Clearly this cannot go on forever, as the Council would soon not have the money needed to fulfil all its obligations.

So what are the increases in costs? One, for example, is that the Parish Council now has the responsibility to keep the pavements along side the B3004 clear and safe for pedestrians to use. This is considered to be high priority - with the increase in volume, size and speed of vehicles we must clear vegetation obstructing the path, forcing people to walk closer to or even stepping into the road. This can be a real hazard especially for people with children, pushchairs and mobility scooters. HCC initially gave us an extra £1,000 per year for the path clearance and we have had to supplement this in order to do a decent job. HCC has now reduced its allocation to us for pavement clearance by £250 and we will have to make up the difference from the precept.

The warranty on the children's play equipment on Upper Green has just run out. So the Parish Council will now pick up the bills for repairs.

Two three-year contracts come up for renewal this year and we have to plan for some, hopefully small, increases in these costs. The first is the insurance for St Nicholas Church, the playground and allotment site. The second is for grounds maintenance keeping St Nicholas Cemetery, Lower Green and Upper Green looking tidy and cared for and removing safety hazards such as fallen or rotting trees.

The Parish Council uses the Kingsley Centre as it headquarters for meetings, postal address and storage of documents. The Centre has been very generous in recent years by accepting a very low payment for these services. Now, understandably under more austere circumstances, the Centre needs to charge more realistic rates based on actual cost and this will result in an increased cost for the Parish Council.

Some of you will know that the Parish Council recently had a windfall from the sale of a small parcel of land near Upper Green. Under rules governing local councils this money has to be spent on capital items and cannot be used for operational purposes. We cannot, unfortunately, use it to reduce the precept which is used predominantly for day-to-day running costs.

Full details of the budget can be seen on the Parish Council website (click on the Transparency link at [www.kingsleyparishcouncil.org](http://www.kingsleyparishcouncil.org))

Chris Rigden

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