

Before setting the precept budget for the coming year, the council has looked closely at the council tax charges made by other parish councils around us. We identified Kingskerswell's facilities are lagging behind because we are receiving amounts on a par with villages and hamlets such as Manaton and Denbury. Even Coffinswell has more funds to deal with repairs and improve facilities.

We take great pride in spending the precept wisely, for example this year a waste management bill, previously the responsibility of Teignbridge District Council, was made the responsibility of Kingskerswell Parish Council. This bill has been costing the council taxpayer in the region of £9,000 per year. Through responsible investigation and comparison of services available we have managed to decimate this bill to around £3,000.

So, what has changed?

- We have been made aware that in the coming year it is anticipated that parish councils will inherit more responsibility for services which are currently carried out by district councils; we need to be financially prepared for this.
- No one can have foreseen the events of the last twelve months. As a council that has historically kept the precept low, we have found that the extra burden of COVID-19 measures coupled with several other headwinds has consumed our budget for 2020 and left us with a deficit rather than surplus. Put simply, we are unable to responsibly deliver the services that our residents should expect without a modest increase in the precept.
- The toilets in Fore Street have had to be closed during the COVID-19 outbreak but were reopened temporarily over the Christmas period; we hope to reopen them permanently at the earliest opportunity. However, they cost the village £9,000 per year, made up from cleaning, maintenance and repairs due to vandalism. This is a significant percentage of the annual budget, but the council feels this is necessary expenditure to encourage our residents to confidently use the shops in the heart of the village.
- Because of the Ash Dieback disease there is a need to carry out urgent safety work to improve the safety of Kingskerswell Down and public rights of way.
- Additionally, we need to employ a specialist mapping company to assess the whole of the village and develop a management plan to identify trees susceptible or already infected with ash dieback.

With respect to the Ash Dieback issue, it is becoming more serious, Ash trees quickly succumb to the disease and die. This risks public safety from falling branches or whole trees. We have been playing a waiting game in the last few years, but we must now act to deal with the infected trees. The council have only been able to estimate this cost at present and have therefore set a realistic contingency fund to help cover shortfall and/or deal with local emergencies.

As a result, your Parish Council has voted unanimously on the proposed budget for the forthcoming year. Whilst in percentage terms the increase may appear large, in reality it represents around a £14 increase in the annual council tax bill for the average household, or 28 pence a week. The parish council currently represents 1.5 % of your entire council tax

bill, by far the smallest item by quite a margin. We believe this will cover most urgent projects and increasing demands for improvements around the village in the coming year.

The Parish Council are made up of unpaid volunteers, parish councillors receive no remuneration for involvement and are council taxpayers themselves! We thank you for your continued support.

We currently have vacancies on the parish council, if you are interested in joining the Kingskerswell Parish Council please contact the clerk at kkpcclerk@gmail.com