



Minutes of Kingsclere Parish Council Finance and Establishment Meeting FE 04/21 Held at 7.30pm on Monday 18th October 2021 in the Village Club

FE 04/21 – Present:

Cllrs: Bowes; Farey; Mussett; Peach R; Sawyer J. Clerk – Ackrill; RFO – Porton; Assistant Clerk – Read.

04/21.1 – Apologies:

Cllr F Sawyer

04/21.2 – Declarations of Interest:

Cllrs: Bowes; R Peach - Item 5 Allotment Fees

04/21.3 – Matters Arising:

None.

04/21.4 – Review of 2021-22 Budget and Forecast:

Documents circulated prior to meeting. Document reviewed and questions answered. It was noted that allotment fees are expected in January and that there is slightly more money in the mowing and maintenance budget at this point in the year than was expected. It was clarified that the cost for removing the travellers from the Holding Field was included in the "Holding Field" expenditure line, and it was suggested to separate this and create a new "Legal Fees" expenditure line. The cost for the new padlock and chain for the Holding Field gate was taken from capital expenditure. No other comments or concerns.

04/21.5 – Review of Rents and Fees:

CM has been reviewing and researching comparisons for all fees as part of KPC's financial planning. Rents and fee proposition papers for the Allotments and Cemetery were drafted and circulated prior to the meeting.

Allotments: The allotments will remain, irrespective of the fee review, an area where KPC do not seek to profit from the land value itself. The allotments use a lot of office staff time, the cost of which is not reflected in the rent fees. 5 years ago, KPC agreed at an FE meeting to recover costs from the allotments on a rolling 3-year basis. To date, KPC is still approximately £1500 overbudget on the allotments, as costs have not been recovered – it was later noted that this figure was revised and corrected to £933 at October OM (Minutes ref OM 09/21.12). Comparisons on rent fees have been made with other randomly selected councils, and it was concluded that was not overly helpful due to the wildly varied scale of rent fees charged. The proposed changes to the rents and fees include new charges of £25 for new allotment agreements and £10 for allotment renewals, and an increase in the price per pole rent for allotments. The charges for allotment agreements would be allocated to the office running budget, and the increased rent for the allotments would be used to fund the maintenance of the allotments with any surplus funds being saved for future projects or expenditure on the allotments. After discussion, it was agreed to slightly alter the proposed rent increases for a pole to £8.50 a pole for all sizes of allotment plot. It was noted that any 5 pole allotments that become available are being split into two 2.5 pole plots, to maximise the number of residents that are able to have an allotment. It was agreed to recommend to full council at October OM to accept the new admin charges and increased pole rent 1st January 2022, and it was suggested that if approved, allotment holders should be informed of the changes in rents and fees prior to allotment renewals being sent in December.

Cemetery: The running of the cemetery takes up a considerable amount of office staff and volunteer time as well as money. The monetary cost to run the cemetery is more than the income it generates, meaning that fees need to be increased. Comparisons on fees have been made with other randomly selected Parish Councils which have been very helpful and informative, and indicate that at present, KPC's Cemetery fees are cheap. The proposed fee increases would mean KPC sits more in the middle of the table comparatively. It was noted that the increase in fees is not because KPC is trying to profiteer off the Cemetery, but because the cost of the running of the cemetery in office hours and monetary cost should be fully funded by the chargeable fees, and not rely on KPC's reserves to make up any shortfall. The cemetery is filling up and KPC is looking to complete a cemetery development plan, however, would need funds not generated from reserves or the precept in order to complete the projects in this plan. The proposed fees are split into two sections. Items in section 1 being fees for things including burials, interments, and purchase of exclusive rights, charged at resident and non-resident rates, non-resident rates being double the price of resident rates. Fees in section 2 being for things that take up office time, such as preparation of forms or requests for burial records, which would be charged at the same rate for both resident and non-residents. Money raised from fees in section 1 would be spent on the maintenance of the cemetery and any unspent would be accrued for spending on projects in the cemetery development plan. Money raised from fees in section 2 would be allocated directly to the office running cost budget. It was noted that the proposed increase in cemetery fees is substantial, but this is only because KPC's cemetery fees have been incredibly cheap by comparison for a number of years. It was noted that KPC has not charged for interment of remains into a half-plot for a child in the past, and the proposed fees include a new charge for interment in a half-plot. It was suggested that KPC may be criticized for including a new fee for child interment. It was clarified that half-

plots are no longer dug, and any child buried would have had a full plot, with no charge. After discussion it was agreed that, as the minimum legal age to purchase exclusive rights is 16 years old, KPC would not charge for interment of a person who had died before the day of their 16th birthday. It was also agreed that fees for the first and second interment of a grave should be the same cost. It was queried what the definitions of a resident and non-residents should be, it was agreed that CM would research what definitions other burial authorities have and bring a proposal to next OM. The cemetery rules and regulations are currently under review and will take into account the new proposed fees. It was agreed to recommend to full council at October OM to accept the proposed cemetery fees, with the alterations mentioned effective from 1st April 2022. CM to redraft cemetery fees proposition paper and bring to next OM.

Action: CM. October OM.

04/21.6 – Review of Reserve Allocations:

On 31st March 2021 the cash reserves were £51,299.11. Since then, KPC has spent £12,755 on the white gates project and there is an anticipated overspend of £6095 which is then taken from reserves, making the expected cash reserves on 31st March 2022 to be £32,449.11. KPC agreed to have a 3-month running cost of £19,000 as a cash reserve which would mean that the reserves to allocate at year end are expected to be £13,449.11. Identified funds to come from reserves include the cost of land registry, addressing hazards identified in risk assessments, costs of dealing with fly tipping, costs of website accessibility compliance, as well as other items, totalling £15,875. The additional £2500 would need to be allocated from the precept. It was also noted that this shortfall in the reserves would mean that the planned 5% budget variance would also now need to be allocated from the precept and not the reserves as originally planned. It was noted that the 5% budget variance cost should in theory be a one-off charge, as the funds would roll over year on year.

04/21.7 – Review of 2022-23 Budget:

Document handed out at the meeting. The RFO is anticipating a 1% increase in the mowing and maintenance grant, and no changes as yet to the Litter Warden grant as this is based on the national living wage. There has been an increase in the subscriptions budget, on the basis of acquiring new cemetery mapping and management software in the next financial year. The budget for the Making a Difference Awards (MaD Awards) is reduced to £0 as it was agreed that KPC would hold the MaD Awards biennially and so the next MaD Awards will not be until 2023. A “Risk Assessment” expenditure line has been added, as KPC need to complete things such as PAT tests of the office equipment and memorial topple testing. It was noted that this expenditure should be listed as separate to Risk Assessments, as these tests are known to KPC, so the Risk Assessment expenditure line should be for items identified on risk assessments that need addressing. As the 2022-2023 budget stands, including the proposed changes to the Allotment and Cemetery rents and fees discussed in item 5, the current proposed precept is £67,780, a 35% increase from last year. It was calculated that with the current proposed precept and the council tax base rate staying the same, this would be a cost of £52.26 for a band D property. It was agreed to refer the budget to October OM.

Action: October OM

04/21.8 – Date of next meeting:

Monday 24th January 2022 7:30pm in the Village Club.

Meeting closed 21:12

Signed:.....Chairman

Date:.....

Signed:.....Clerk

Date:.....

Distribution: Cllrs: S Adams; I Bowes; M Farey; C Mussett; N Peach; R Peach; A Price; F Sawyer and J Sawyer.
Noticeboard; Website: www.kingsclere-pc.org.uk.