

## **Kidlington Parish Council**

### **Chair's report**

#### **February 2020**

The Parish Council has now set its budget for the financial year starting in April and has asked for a precept of £716,715. The precept is the money collected on our behalf by Cherwell District Council to enable us to provide services for the village. Next year's precept represents an increase of 2.8% on the previous year, slightly above the rate of inflation currently estimated at about 2%. It equates to £145.80 per annum for a Band D property in Kidlington, and we believe represents good value for money.

In addition, the Parish Council generates revenue through the hire of its facilities, grants or sponsorship, and the careful investment of its funds. In the current year all this brought our estimated income up from a precept of just under £700k to a total of £865k.

The largest expenditure item for the Parish Council is the upkeep of the property and open spaces we manage on your behalf. This includes two burial grounds at St Mary's and on Bicester Road, five allotment sites, six children's play parks, St Mary's Fields, Stratfield Brake Sports Ground, and the facilities and property at Exeter Close, as well as many other open spaces around the village.

The Parish Council puts on events enjoyed by many of our residents, particularly Kidlington Gala Day, the Fireworks Event at Stratfield Brake and the Christmas Lights Switch-On, all of which were very well attended last year. We also give grants to local charities and organisations throughout the year.

In 2015 the Parish Council sold some land at the north end of the village, now Lincroft Meadow Care Home, which has provided funds to use on larger capital projects. These have included the new equipment in the play areas at Exeter Close and more recently at Ron Groves Park on Maple Avenue. We also bought a new van for our grounds staff which was a cost saving on the previously leased vehicle. We have invested some of the funds for future large projects, notably the redevelopment of Exeter Close, a project we are working on with our partners at Oxfordshire County Council, Cherwell District Council, the Key Medical Practice and Oxford Health.

Since we continue to look for efficiencies to keep our running costs as low as practicable, but without impacting on the services we provide, it would have been possible for us to keep the precept increase below the estimated rate of inflation. However we recently joined many other councils in adopting a Climate Emergency Statement, as a result of which we have committed to significantly reducing our own carbon footprint and helping residents to do the same. Unfortunately this cannot be done without some additional cost, which we hope and believe council-tax payers will accept is worthwhile. As a first step in November, we gave away 100 young trees to local residents, as well as planting many of our own in the village centre and along the main road.

DAVID ROBEY