



## Kidlington Parish Council Newsletter 2020

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### Annual Parish Meeting Cancelled

This public meeting was originally scheduled to be held on 30 April. The meeting is an opportunity for Kidlington residents to hear what their Parish Council has done in the previous year and ask questions about matters related to the Parish Council's activities.

Although we were unable to hold the meeting this year, we are very keen to hear from residents. If there are questions that you would like to ask that are related to Parish Council activities then please contact us by email – [clerk@kidlington-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@kidlington-pc.gov.uk) or in writing to Exeter Hall, Oxford Road, Kidlington, OX5 1AB.

### Covid Emergency

Councillors and office staff have been working at home since the lockdown. We are holding regular informal meetings on-line, and, starting from the Annual Council Meeting on 14 May, we will hold formal meetings on the Zoom platform with public participation.

The Council's grounds staff have worked throughout the crisis keeping our cemeteries and open spaces in good order and keeping themselves safe by maintaining social distancing.

Ahead of the lockdown, we began collaborating with the **Kidlington and Surrounding Areas Community Hub (KASA)**, an extensive network of volunteers who provide help with shopping, picking up prescriptions and other tasks such as dog walking, signposting to other organisations or just a friendly chat. The Council provided KASA with a dedicated phone line, assisted with essential strategic planning and helped with a leaflet drop to every household in Kidlington letting them know about this and other services. The aim is to ensure that vulnerable people and those most at risk do not need to leave their homes and have a single point of contact.

The Council has been able to support the **Cherwell Community Larder** by opening up Exeter Hall weekly to allow for the distribution of food parcels to families across the district. We are also in

constant touch with the **North Oxfordshire Food Bank** (based in Kidlington Baptist Church) to ensure that they have the resources they need to provide for those who find themselves in need of support.

These three organizations together are providing extensive solid support for emergency-related needs.

We have been allowing the Fruit and Vegetable market stall to trade from Exeter Close car park so that residents can get hold of fresh produce without having to visit a supermarket. Full social distancing has been observed. In lieu of rent we have asked them to provide fruit and vegetables for the food parcels provided by the Community Larder.

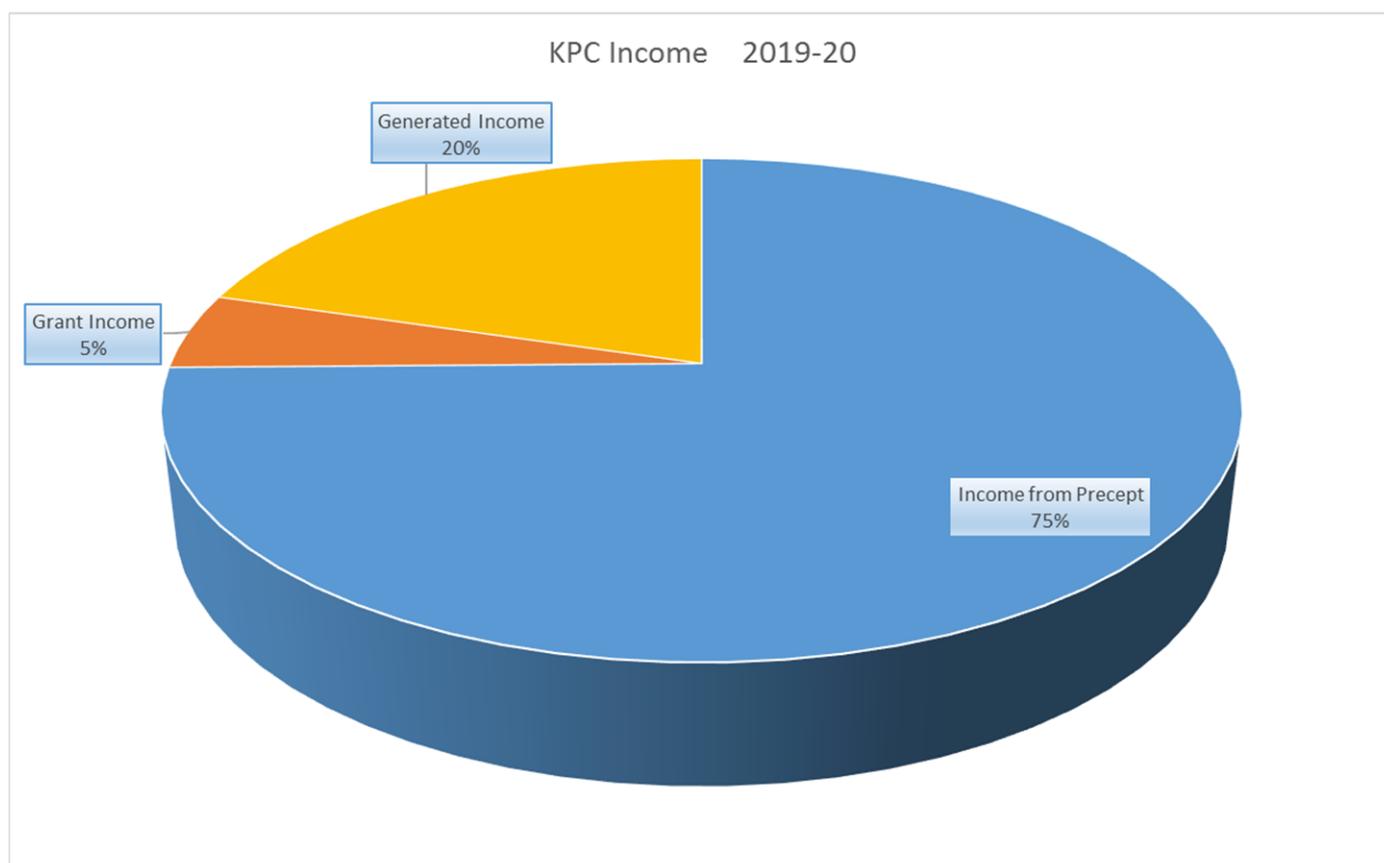
We have created a number of emergency information pages on the Parish Council website. Along with emergency support contacts and other useful numbers, we have collated information about local food deliveries and home resources: see [www.kidlington-pc.gov.uk](http://www.kidlington-pc.gov.uk).

Many informal groups have been set up around the village to enable people to help their immediate neighbours with shopping and other tasks. We are encouraging these groups to register on the Oxfordshire All In website which helps us to understand what is happening around the village and look out for any gaps. We are also encouraging volunteers to feed information back about people who are having difficulty obtaining support. We are developing a joint communications strategy with Cherwell District Council, and coordinating our support efforts with theirs.

## Parish Council Finances

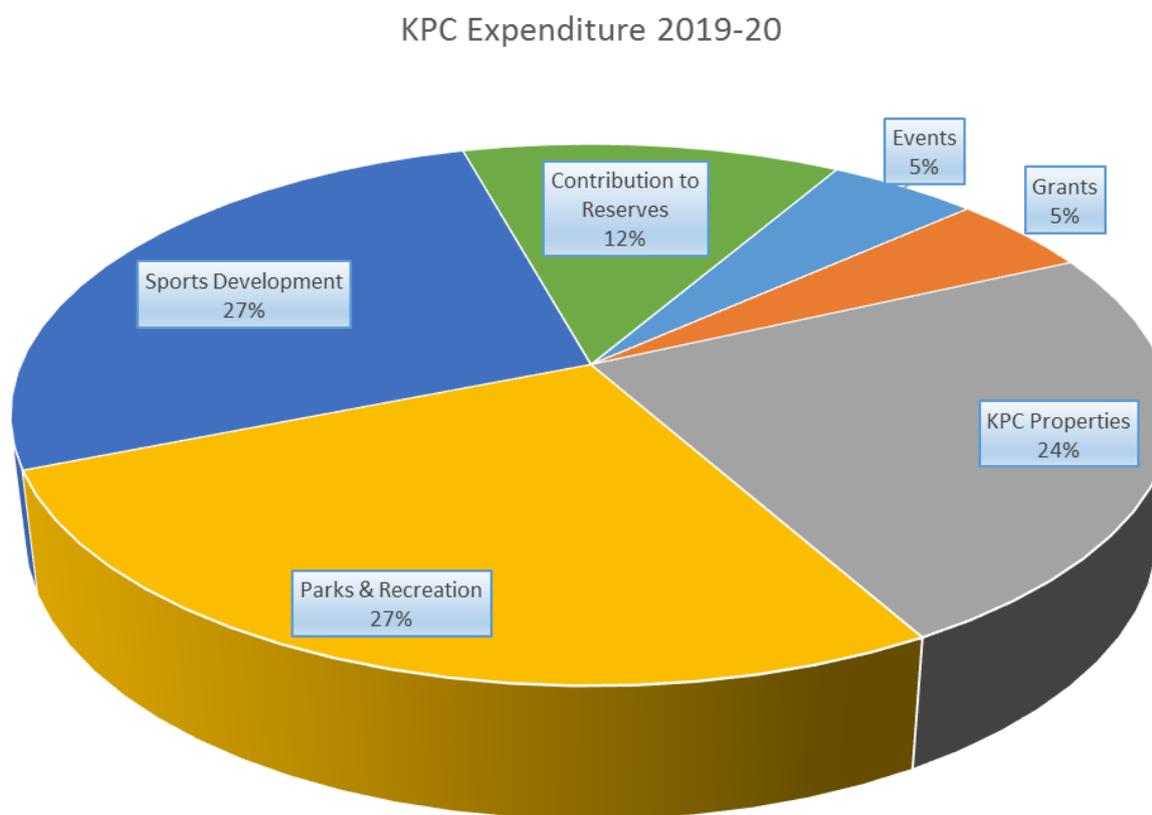
### Income

The council secures a substantial amount of its income from the precept which is a proportion of your council tax. The rest of our income comes from grants and charges made for the hire of facilities. The chart below shows the proportion from each source. The total income from April 2019 to March 2020 was £933,138.



### Expenditure

The way the council spends its income is shown in the chart below. The costs of administration of the council have been split between all of the cost centres.



- Parks and Recreation includes maintenances of our green spaces. This includes cemeteries, allotments, play areas, verges and open spaces.
- Sports Development is the money the council contributes towards sporting activity in the village. A large part of this expenditure is the contribution towards the running of Stratfield Brake sports facility.
- KPC Properties includes Exeter Hall and the Pavilion at Exeter Close.
- Grants are for local community groups and organisations who apply to the council throughout the year.
- Events relates to the Council's annual community events: Kidlington Gala Day, Christmas Lights Switch On and Bonfire Night Fireworks

### 2020-21 Precept

The Parish Council has now set its budget for the financial year starting in April and has asked for a precept of £716,715. 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. The increase was needed in order to cover some of the costs resulting from the Council's Climate Emergency Statement (see below).

## Climate Emergency Group

In 2019 Kidlington Parish Council joined many other councils across the country in declaring a climate emergency. To assist with making noticeable change in Kidlington the Council set up an Climate Emergency Working Group to find ways that we can change how we manage our buildings and land so that we can actively make a difference to climate change. Eventually we will be inviting members of the community to contribute to the working group, so keep an eye out for further updates.

## Major Planning Issues

As we write this Newsletter discussion is all but concluded of Cherwell District Council's proposals for 4,400 new homes, in and around Kidlington, to meet Oxford City's housing need. As things stand, only 120 new homes are planned in Kidlington itself, at Stratfield Farm. A further 430 have been allocated around the Bicester Road Cemetery in Gosford. All the rest will be in Begbroke, Yarnton, Gosford and Cutteslowe, but they will undoubtedly have an impact on Kidlington residents through increased pressure on services and infrastructure. The green gap between Kidlington and Oxford will be reduced to almost nothing.

The Parish Council has objected to the proposals at every stage, on the grounds that Oxford's calculation of housing need is excessive, with insufficient provision for house-building within the city. We have employed the services of a Planning Consultant to represent the Council at hearings both with Cherwell and with Oxford City. But the inspectors seem now set to approve both authorities' plans, and no alternative is left but the very problematic possibility of a judicial appeal.

The other major planning threat, the East-West Expressway, seems to have gone quiet for the moment. Many think that it will not happen: the proposed consultation period has not been fixed. But given the drastic implications for the area we live in, we should not yet be complacent.

## Bicester Road Cemetery

As a result of exceptional weather conditions, the cemetery was waterlogged for long periods during the winter, although it has now been dry for some time. The Council very much regrets the distress this has caused bereaved families. Many parts of the village and elsewhere have also been affected by the very wet weather conditions.



Shortly after the election of the new Council last May, a workplan was initiated to extend further the drainage works that the previous Council had undertaken. The necessary first step was to clear and regrade the ditch running along the cemetery's Northern boundary. For ecological reasons the work

had to be delayed until the winter. Once its effects were clear, the Council was able to make plans for an extensive new network of drains and paths in the burial area. These have now been agreed and are currently going through the process of planning approval. Covid permitting, the work will be carried out before the winter. We have had to follow a step-by-step process, and have done so as fast as practicable. Once the drainage works have been carried out, we will also introduce new landscaping features.

## Events

The Parish Council put on three community events in 2019. The Gala Day in July was a great success with hundreds of local families enjoying free activities throughout the day. This year's event had a rural feel with donkey rides on the back field and a petting zoo near Exeter Hall. New for this year was Green Lane – a collection of local organisations whose aim is to improve the local environment and get local people involved. We also held a Fireworks Display at Stratfield Brake on Bonfire Nights and hundreds turned out for the annual switch on of the Christmas Lights in the High Street and Piazza. Whilst we have had to cancel this year's Gala Day we very much hope that we can put on some great events for residents later in the year.

## Ron Groves Park

In December 2019 we completed the refurbishment of the new play area at Ron Groves Park and held a Christmas Party to celebrate. The funding for this £100k project came from the Council's capital reserves which is the money we received when we sold the land at the Gravel Pits at the top of The Moors. The installation by HAGS includes many new pieces of equipment including the popular viper rope swing.



## Parish Council Grants

Throughout the year, the Parish Council offers grants to community groups and local charities. This year we have given grants to the Kidlington Historical Society, Garden City Football Club, Our Bus Bartons, Citizens Advice, Kidlington Recreational Trust, the Animation Station, the Royal British Legion, Kidlington Lunch Club, Kidlington Bingo, Association for the Blind and the Kidlington Children's Hub at St John's Church.

At this time, we have set aside funds for organisations who are helping during the current emergency. Please find the grant form on the Parish Council website.

## Grow Your Own

Kidlington Parish Council manages 5 allotments sites across the village at Yarnton Road, Hazel Walk, Station Fields, Blenheim Road and Bicester Road. There are over 140 plots being cultivated by local residents growing fresh, organic produce, although not without a lot of hard work on the part of the allotment holders. The annual cost of a plot is just £37 or £22 for half a plot. There are short waiting lists at some sites but available plots at others. If you are interested in renting a plot please contact the Parish Council on 01865 372143.

## Bicycle Racks

We have been working with the District Council to identify locations for additional cycle racks to make it easier for everyone to use their bicycles. If you are aware of a location in the village that you think would benefit from a bicycle rack, perhaps by one of the bus stops or parks, then please let us know.

## Keep Kidlington Tidy

We had to cancel our village wide Keep Britain Tidy event on 30 March due to the lockdown. We are continuing to work with the District Council to keep the village looking smart during this time. We are, as always, grateful for the support of residents to keeping our streets clean and tidy.

## K5 Better Together

This project initiated by Cherwell District Council aims to support Kidlington and surrounding villages – Gosford with Water Eaton, Thrupp, Yarnton, Begbroke and Islip – with funding to enable and enhance health and wellbeing across the community. It aims to follow in the footsteps of the Bicester Healthy Town initiative of 2018, which saw the development of health routes linking estates with open spaces. The K5 agenda is wide ranging. So over the past five months we have focused on the following.

- **Way finding.** Currently Cherwell are writing a bid seeking £60k for capital works for way finding from Sport England. Three walking loops around Kidlington are being discussed, linking the library to the sports centre and all parks. There is potential for combining these with historic walking guides and information boards.
- **FAST (Families Active Sporting Together) programme.** Since the lockdown the Sports and Leisure Team have changed delivery of the FAST family programme by offering a bespoke service to families through Pick n Mix programme where families can join the FAST team who design activities that fit in with what they have available in their home spaces. This has gone out to 5500 individuals and 1600 families. See [www.cherwell.gov.uk/youngpeople](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk/youngpeople).
- **Junior Park Run.** This project aims to offer a weekly family park run especially with children aged 4-14 in mind. We are exploring different options where a community café or club could be available or nearby for refreshments. This is on hold until COVID regulations are eased.
- **Housing insulation and small repair grants.** During February leaflets were delivered to most of the non-social housing properties in Kidlington where occupants might be in fuel poverty. It offers home-owners who are in need of upgrading their insulation and house fabric a grant of c.£5k.