

FINANCE, GOVERNANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2018–19

The Finance, Governance and Policy Committee (FG&P) comprises the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Parish Council together with the Chairman of the Planning Committee and two other parish councillors. Other councillors with a specific interest in items being considered by the FG&P Committee are encouraged to attend its meetings to make their views known. The committee normally meets six times a year - all meetings being open to the public.

Once again an additional meeting was held during the year to finalise budgets for the parish and to recommend a precept for the year 2019–2020. The recommendation was subsequently accepted by the Parish Council. It was to increase King's Sutton Parish Council's share of council tax due to be collected in 2019-2020 to £68,100. This is the equivalent of an additional £2.30 a year (3.0%) for a Band D property, from £76.73 to £79.03.

Cost increases such as the Thursday Bus becoming a weekly service and a 5% increase in the per journey charge made by the bus company, a 23% uplift in electricity charges, increased costs of maintaining the website, litter cleansing charge increases and rises in the cost of the rental charge for the Clerk's Office were the principal reasons behind this 3% rise. Discussion took place on whether this increase could have been lessened by dipping into the General Reserves of the Council more deeply than by the £2,500 estimated, but it was decided that it would be not be prudent to do so due to the uncertainties surrounding the effect of the Northamptonshire local government reforms currently being undertaken.

As its title suggests, the Committee's main responsibilities are to consider and make recommendations to the full parish council on financial, governance and policy matters. During the past year this work has included: -

- the preparation of the draft budget and precept
- the regular examination of all council payments and receipts
- the review of the effectiveness of internal control arrangements which is informed by the quarterly internal control checks now carried out by Councillor David Wood who replaces Councillor Roger Burne who has retired from the Council. The Committee is most grateful to both of these Councillors for carrying out this regular task.
- the review and monitoring of recommendations relating to the allocation of Section 106 and other grant monies
- the review of various contracts for services such as grass cutting, litter services and website maintenance
- the consideration of applications for financial assistance from village individuals/groups
- the examination, preparation and confirmation of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations – this year including compliance with General Data Protection Regulations
- the consideration of financial and contractual arrangements for the carrying out of various amenity projects.

A good deal of the Committee's attention during the year was paid to the problems arising from the cancellation by Northamptonshire County Council of the 499 bus service. It had been hoped that a reduced version of the original 499 service might be possible with

subsidies from the affected local councils. However South Northants District Council showed no inclination to help in this regard, and the resulting cost was too much for the various parish councils involved to bear. After meetings with Aynho Parish Council it was eventually agreed to originate the fortnightly King's Sutton Thursday Bus service from there and run an Aynho Friday Bus in alternate weeks running up to Christmas.

In the new year it was decided to drop the Aynho Friday service and run the King's Sutton Thursday Bus weekly, originating in Aynho. The average number of passengers has now risen to over 20 per week. This is considerably greater than the 8-passenger average that applied before the demise of the 499. It has therefore recently been agreed to continue this weekly operation with regular reviews of passenger numbers every six months. Despite the increase in passengers the subsidy from Parish Council funds is likely to be in the region of £2,000 per annum but it is felt that this is a worthwhile service that needs to be available for the benefit of village residents.

Another project being developed has been the plan to extend the Cemetery. The budgeted cost for this development currently stands at just over £50,000 to include land acquisition, various associated consultancy and legal expenses plus paths, roadway and fencing costs etc. By 31st March 2019 a sum of £26,000 had been set aside for the purpose and the Committee took the decision to apply for a £15,000 share of the SNC New Homes Bonus Local Community Grant to pay for the land acquisition part of these costs. The good news is that the Community Funding Officer has recently confirmed that our application has been successful.

As well as monitoring the disbursement of previously agreed Section 106 monies the Committee recommended that the Council should provide £1,000 funding for the 'Lits for Kids' project to improve the library facilities at the King's Sutton Primary Academy.

Towards the end of the year the Committee examined the Council's various reserve funds and proposed reallocation of some of the no longer required Flood Alleviation Fund - £5,000 to the Cemetery Extension Fund, £30,000 to the Traffic Calming Fund to address the increasing problems of excessive traffic and traffic speed in the village and £5,000 to the Play Area Renewal Fund. General Reserves are currently estimated to be at a level of approximately £70,000 by the end of next year. This is considered to be a prudent level, standing at somewhat below one year's worth of normal Parish Council expenses

In carrying out the various tasks allotted to it, the Committee has relied very heavily on the expertise, advice and work of the Parish Clerk who is also the council's Responsible Finance Officer. The Committee and I wish to thank her once again for her excellent and efficient support in dealing with all of these issues.

Ronnie Irving

Chairman – Finance Governance and Policy Committee 2018/19.