Clerk’s report (November 2023)

The receipt of **High Impact planning applications** for consultee comments has required two extra-ordinary meetings. Arranging and administering these has taken up considerable clerking time resulting in a number of actions from the September meeting being down-prioritised, these therefore remain out-standing.

Information on the **GOPCC Perceptions of Crime Survey** was shared with parishioners via the KPC Facebook page, Kempley Keep in touch WhatsApp group and subscriber email with link to the online survey. The survey has now closed.

The **CARS toolkit** was also shared via social media with a request for volunteers interested in forming a ‘Speedwatch’ group to come forward. At the time of writing there has been no response. The ’20 is plenty’ road signs have been located and are available for use if/when required.

The **Local Government Boundary Commission** wants to hear what residents and local organisations think about the proposals to change the boundaries of the Political Map in Gloucestershire. A 10-week consultation on the proposals will run until 11 December 2023. Kempley Parish is not affected by the proposed changes.

Grace van der Wielen, Social Scientist, Northern Research Station, Midlothian, Scotland, EH25 9SY has requested a parish councillor provides input to a study of the potential impacts resulting from the **reintroduction of pine martens.** In 2017-2018, Forest Research were commissioned by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to assess local attitudes towards a proposed pine marten reintroduction into the Forest of Dean. Findings from this and others’ research subsequently led to a series of reintroductions between 2019 and 2021. With pine martens having now been present in the FoD for a number of years, the project is seeking to understand through an anonymous interview process, if (and how) attitudes towards the species have changed, and to seek feedback on how the reintroduction process has been managed. This may be carried out over the phone or via a video call expected to last around 30-45 minutes. No specialist knowledge of pine martens or the reintroduction process is necessary to take part.

The **Councillor Advocacy Scheme** aims to create and strengthen relationships between the neighbourhood policing team and local councillors. It will enable a direct line of communication between local councils and their neighbourhood teams as well as the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC). Councils are asked to nominate a representative to become involved. Contact Annie White, Volunteer & Engagement Officer if interested:  **engagement.officer@gloucestershire-pcc.gov.uk**

**Upcoming GAPTC Training opportunities:**

Networking: ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH Tue, 28 Nov 2023 18:00 Combined clerks' and councillors' session.

Finance for Councillors Thu, 30 Nov 2023 10:00.

Book online at: <https://www.gaptc.org.uk/training-and-events>.

Budget 2024

This year, a small increase in general reserves has been achieved, forecast to be £1,213 at the end of the financial year. This remains below the recommended level of three to six months’ worth of expenditure and the Council should aim to increase this to a minimum of £1,500 over the next 2 years to give greater security against unforeseen expenditure.

Excluding the grant funds that remain from the Build Back Better Fund received for the Daffodil Weekend (£1,266), earmarked reserves are projected to total £2,929 providing a robust overall financial position.

KPC resolved to keep this year’s Precept increase to 2%. Inflationary pressures continue to affect many budget lines, so a larger increase is recommended next year to maintain the current position. Failure to do so is likely to lead to a more significant increase in future years. The main cost pressures have come from contractual staff salary increases (approx. 8.3%), Insurance costs (approx. 10%) and membership/subscription costs (approx. 10%).

**In setting next year’s budget, KPC should consider the following:**

* Funding of potential future projects for which there is no current budget provision e.g. road verge maintenance, insurance/maintenance of play park equipment.
* McAffee virus protection was an unanticipated expense this year. 2 years of cover was purchased in 2023 so nothing has been included in next year’s budget for this.
* Ionos Domain Lock and Domain Guard will cost £15 in 2024. This provides additional security against hacking etc. The Council’s domain is repeatedly targeted with multiple failed log-in attempts.
* An annual subscription to Parish Online mapping software may cost £40 + VAT, however Clear Councils Insurance (formerly BHIB) have indicated that a subscription will be offered at a reduced price as part of their renewal in 2024. They are unable to give a fixed quote until nearer the time of renewal.
* Defibrillators: one battery is due for replacement in April 2024 at a cost of £317, a set of pads will also expire in December 2024 at a replacement cost of £84. The budget has been set to balance the current small overspend (£38) which has been incurred due to replacing the two other defibs’ batteries in 2023, plus £40 in case any pads get used.
* In recruiting a new clerk, they may come with a level of experience making it appropriate to offer pay at a higher point on the NALC salary scale.

**Options:**

* The budget suggested will increase the Parish Council’s portion of Council Tax by 9.37% for a Band D property.
* The period of March, April, May is always particularly busy for the clerk due to the work created by the end of year accounts, the Annual Governance Return and organising the Annual Parish Meeting. An opportunity for the new clerk to claim overtime for these additional hours should be considered. 10 hours split across the three months would cost an additional £130.60 which would increase the percentage to 11.46%.
* Defib batteries are recommended for replacement every 5 years. The Village Hall defib’s battery reaches 5 years in April 2024. Council could consider delaying replacement one year saving £317. This would reduce the increase to 4.32%.
* To do both the above would result in a percentage increase of 6.40%.

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| **Parish Council** | **2023 Precept** | **2023 Tax Base** | **2023 Band D contribution** |
| Kempley | £6,180 | 138.4 | £44.65 |
| Upton Bishop | £18,626 | 265.8 | £70.08 |
| Much Marcle | £9,075 | 299.9 | £30.27 |
| Dymock | £25,000 | 518.1 | £48.25 |

**Actions tracker:**

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| **Actions from Ordinary Meeting 18th September 2023** | **Date Set** | **Status** |
| Clerk to write to the Friends of Kempley Churches to request they organise a Act of Remembrance on the Village Green. | 18/09/23 | Done |
| Cllr. Goodwin will assess whether the old Christmas Tree lights are repairable and if so, get them PAT tested. | 18/09/23 |  |
| clerk to request invoices from the Village Hall Committee for use of the Hall and bring to the next meeting for approval. | 18/09/23 | Done |
| clerk to request grit bins from GCC. | 18/09/23 | Done |
| clerk to organise trimming of vegetation on Fishool bus shelter. | 18/09/23 | Done |
| clerk to write to Colin Chick, GCC Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure to request GCC cover the cost of residents using HCC recycling centres. | 18/09/23 |  |
| clerk to identify availability of campervan specific ‘No Overnight Parking’ signage. | 18/09/23 |  |
| Clerk to write again about the C1289 Much Marcle road requesting that resurfacing is reconsidered. | 18/09/23 |  |
| Thanks to be shared via WhatsApp for the ring binder on the frame of the Village Green bus shelter noticeboard. | 18/09/23 | Done |
| clerk to send formal letter of thanks to a parishioner for clearing vegetation around fire hydrants and kissing gates and for providing useful information to the GCC Public Rights of Way Team. | 18/09/23 |  |
| clerk to include the cost of a subscription to Parish Online in the budget for 2024/25. | 18/09/23 | Done |
| clerk to send Cllr. Lewis the log-ins for Parish Online | 18/09/23 | Done |
| clerk to find current rates of pay for Snow Plough operators and inform Cllr. Goodwin who will clarify with the existing operator. | 18/09/23 | Done |
| clerk to make the Community Approaches to Road Safety information available via social media, asking for feedback from parishioners on whether there is a significant road safety problem in Kempley and offering support from the Parish Council to set up a volunteer ‘Speedwatch’ group. | 18/09/23 | Done |
| clerk to re-send Parish Council email address log in details to councillors | 18/09/23 | Done |
| clerk to distribute information on Full Fibre Ltd’s road closures schedule via social media and add to the website. | 18/09/23 | Done |
| Cllr. Brocklehurst to walk GKE 12/14/15 to identify potential sites prior to approaching landowners. | 18/09/23 |  |
| a resolution to match fund three more kissing gates to be taken to the November meeting | 18/09/23 | Done |
| Cllr. Goodwin to explore possible demonstration opportunities for a robotic brush cutter | 18/09/23 |  |
| clerk to advertise the vacancy with interviews scheduled in November for a January 2024 start. | 18/09/23 | Done |
| **Actions from previous meetings:** |  |  |
| clerk to set a date in late May 2024 for the Annual Parish Meeting | 10/07/23 |  |
| clerk to obtain tenders for the Village Green maintenance contract for next year. | 10/07/23 |  |
| Chair/clerk to produce a template and populate it for the verges included in the 2008 Licence to Cultivate. | 10/07/23 |  |
| Chair to discuss with volunteers and landowner designs for the new notice board. | 10/07/23 |  |
| clerk to right a letter of thanks to the landowner confirming the new arrangements. | 10/07/23 |  |
| raise overnight parking/obstructive parking with County Highways | 15/05/23 |  |
| Set up an online Kempley ‘Home Page’ with links to different websites. | 15/05/23 |  |
| Clerk to contact Forestry Commission and fact find about boom access | 20/3/23 |  |
| Update the Kempley Emergency Plan. | 20/3/23 |  |
| Use Parish Online software to record the location of existing and new carbon reduction initiatives identified through planning applications | 21/03/22 |  |