

## PARISH COUNCIL NEWS – FOCUS ON FINANCE

"We are acutely aware of our responsibility to use your money carefully. Over 95% of our income arrives through the parish precept that forms a small part of your total Council Tax Demand. In the year to the end of March our precept was £82,500 or £53.75 per Band D home and it funded the four areas – cleanliness and tidiness, facilities, projects and administration - described below. We have carefully evaluated all the things that we have to do in 2014/15 to maintain and enhance village services and amenities and have set a new precept of £99,000 to make this possible. At £1.23 per week for a Band D home we hope you will see this as a fair price to pay for our services," said Douglas Kedge, Chairman of the Parish Council.

To see the full budget behind this precept please go to our website: [www.sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk](http://www.sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk). A copy is available for viewing in the parish office.

**Cleanliness and tidiness** is the work of street cleaning, grass verge cutting, maintaining footpaths, hedges and fences, providing litter bins and dog bins as well as looking after bus shelters and seats. We also fund the work of our unique volunteer Snow Team. Next year all this will cost £21,800.

**Facilities** describes what we do to provide and maintain our three children's play areas, the allotments, Widmore Pond and the CCTV around the village hall. We have set aside £15,000 for the first phase of improvements to the village hall by upgrading the thermal and acoustic insulation. We deal with the effects of the small amount of graffiti and vandalism that we experience. We support the excellent work of the Village Gardeners and also make small grants to other causes. All this will cost £29,100.

**Projects** covers those areas where we make specific expenditures that benefit our residents and safeguard the future of the village. Here is where we provide a grant of £8,000 that keeps the Chiltern Edge Youth Club going. During the year we will be completing our Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) to ensure that the 138 new homes to be built between now and 2027 are of the type and in the places that best suit our community. We expect that we will soon have the £85,755 needed to build the new skatepark at Bishopswood plus a mini one for smaller children inside a play area. We also have to hold a reserve fund to deal with the unexpected. For all this we have budgeted £21,500.

**Administration** is the cost of running the parish council and its committees as professionally as we can. Our friendly Parish Office handles hundreds of phone calls, emails, enquiries and visits from residents as well as from all the other organisations that we have to deal with. We receive and review every planning application made in the village and in some cases we have to support appeals about them. All this will cost £48,395.

Comparison: This table shows how our precept compares with that of other large villages in south Oxfordshire.

Village	Tax base (no. of properties)	Precept for 2014/15
Benson	1,691	115,972
Wheatley	1,610	100,000
Sonning Common	1,549	99,000
Cholsey	1,426	94,020
Goring	1,698	85,713