

REPORT TO:	King's Lynn Area Consultative Committee		
DATE:	5 October 2016		
TITLE:	Recommendations on Special Expense charge for King's Lynn		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Policy development		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Leader, Environment, Housing and Community		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Stuart Ashworth – Assistant Director – Environment & Planning		
OPEN		WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	Yes

## **REPORT SUMMARY**

<b>PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:</b>			
<p>To help provide options for the Committee in its consideration of the King's Lynn Special Expenses for the year 2017/18.</p>			
<b>KEY ISSUES:</b>			
<p>The terms of reference for the King's Lynn Area Consultative Committee (KLACC) describe one of its roles as acting as a consultative forum, on the funding raised by, and utilisation of the King's Lynn Special Expenses, and to offer input on priorities for this expenditure and if appropriate the level of funds to be raised. This will need to be a recommendation to Cabinet.</p> <p>Any recommendations will need to be made in full consideration of the implications on the Special Expenses charge.</p>			
<b>OPTIONS CONSIDERED:</b>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make no recommendations for changes to Special Expenses for the 17/18 financial year.</li> <li>2. Make recommendations to Cabinet on the priorities for, and utilisation of, the Special Expense charge for King's Lynn, for the period 17/18.</li> </ol>			
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the Committee identifies recommended changes (if any) to the current Special Expenses charge.</li> <li>2. That the Committee identifies any particular priorities from the current list of items for which the King's Lynn Special Expenses charge is made.</li> <li>3. That the Committee decide whether or not to recommend a charge on Special Expenses to ensure the toilet facilities at Gaywood and the Walks remain open to the general public.</li> <li>4. That the Committee decide whether or not to recommend that the Council enters discussions with the current owners of the bus shelters within King's Lynn, with a view to investigating the potential to take these on when the current contract expires.</li> </ol>			
<b>REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>			
<p>Making recommendations on the utilisation of Special Expenses for King's Lynn was within the original terms of reference of the Committee. Also the Committee is asked to look at the particular issues relating to the toilets mentioned in the report, and the bus shelters within King's Lynn.</p>			

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 One of the Terms of Reference of KLACC, is “to act as a consultative forum on the funding raised by, and utilisation of the King’s Lynn Special Expenses, and to offer input on priorities for this expenditure and if appropriate the level of funds to be raised.”
- 1.2 The Local Government Finance Act 1992 defines a Local Authority’s Special Expenses. It states that Special Expenses are any expenses incurred by the authority in performing in a part of its area, a function performed elsewhere by a Parish Council.
- 1.3 Special Expenses are currently charged for
- Footway Lighting
  - Community Centres
  - Allotments
  - Dog Bin Emptying
  - Play Areas
  - Pavilions
  - Closed Churchyards
  - Open Spaces

The charges are calculated in various ways, and this is described in more detail in the following section.

- 1.4 The total costs of Special Expenses are met by the Council tax payers of King’s Lynn. The annual charges to the residents are made through an addition to the Council tax bill. The calculation of the charge to the resident is as follows (based on 2016/17 budget figures):

Total Costs of Services	£452,258
Less element of Council Tax Support grant	£34,990
Net Special Expenses Charge 2016/17	£417,270
Council Tax Base-King’s Lynn (Band D)	9,636
Calculated Special Expenses Charge	£43.30
<b>Actual Special Expenses Charge for 2016/2017</b>	<b>£43.30</b>

- 1.5 Currently Special Expenses are broken down as follows:

Footway lights	£27,606
Play Area Equipment	£30,540
Community Centre	£47,860
Closed churchyard maintenance	£9,309
Allotments	£20,360
Pavilions	£30,300
Dog Bins	£10,208
Open Spaces	£276,075
<b>Total</b>	<b>£452,258</b>

- 1.6 To ensure that KLACC is able to provide input into the setting of Special Expenses in King’s Lynn for the 2017/18 financial year, then it will need to make its recommendations at this October meeting.

## **2.0 Issues & Options**

- 2.1 This section breaks down the various areas for which Special Expenses are currently charged, and how the charges are calculated.

### Footway Lighting

- 2.2 The Council maintains a stock of streetlights, mainly on footpaths at present. The costs are calculated on an estimated charge per streetlight. It should be noted that this stock will increase, as the County Council is no longer adopting new street lights within the highway, unless they are deemed to be needed for highway safety reasons. New housing estates within King's Lynn & West Lynn are likely therefore to incur additional costs in the future. This will impact upon the Special Expenses charge going forward.

### Play Area Equipment

- 2.3 This is calculated on the estimated costs for the year, based on the number of pieces of equipment and the inspection regime. King's Lynn also includes the MUGA's and the costs associated with those. The costs will increase in time as new play areas come on stream and also as developer commuted sums expire.

### Community Centres

- 2.4 The Community Centres at Fairstead and St Michaels (South Lynn), are currently dealt with through Special Expenses. The charge is based on the estimated costs for the year, which in turn is based on actual costs from previous years.

### Closed Churchyard maintenance

- 2.5 The closed churchyards within King's Lynn include St Faiths, St Peters (West Lynn), St Johns (The Walks), St Nicholas Chapel, King's Lynn/St Margarets Minster, All Saints Church, Cemetery at the rear of St James Park, and the Quaker Cemetery. The works undertaken include cutting the grass, some planting of bedding plants and their maintenance.

### Allotments

- 2.6 This has been dealt with separately and the Committee has already made recommendations which have been agreed, for the allotments in time to become self-funding by 2019/20. There may therefore be scope to utilise these savings

### Pavilions

- 2.7 The Pavilions at Kingsway, the Dutton Pavilion (River Lane) and West Lynn are maintained by the Borough Council, although the pavilion at West Lynn will not be maintained in the future, but will be handed over to the Social Club. The annual charge is based on the estimated costs, which are based on previous year's actual costs.

## Dog Bins

- 2.8 Dog bins are charged per empty. This is a standard charged across the Borough. There are currently 34 bins emptied twice a week and 83 emptied weekly, within the unparished area.

## Open Spaces

- 2.9 The Council deals with 101 hectares (almost 250 acres) of land for grounds maintenance. This is the largest cost and includes grass cutting, leaf clearance, bedding plants, maintenance work to hedges and some tree work. Grass cutting is the largest element of this. Cutting is based on 6, 12 & 18 cuts per year. At present high profile sites such as the Walks, Tower Garden and Central Park (NORA) benefit from the 18 cut regime. Play areas and highly visible sites generally get 12 cuts per year, with the remainder of sites getting 6 cuts per year.
- 2.10 A separate report is being produced for the Environment and Community Panel meeting on the 12 October, on the overall subject of grass cutting, and the costs involved, across the Borough. This report should be published at the time of the KLACC meeting, so will help inform the debate on this issue.
- 2.11 The Committee can make recommendations as to how the Special Expenses charges, described above, are utilised within the unparished area.
- 2.12 Clearly a proposed reduction in Special Expenses will have knock on effects for the delivery of services within King's Lynn, and residents will see noticeable reductions in services such as dog bin emptying, grass cutting etc. Conversely any increase will need to be properly and fully considered in terms of the impact upon the current Special Expenses charge for the unparished area.

## 3.0 Potential additional items for Special Expenses

### Public Toilets

- 3.1 An informal working group has recently met to discuss the future of the public toilets within the Borough, including King's Lynn. The Council has a budget gap to meet in the next 5 years, and is looking to make savings where possible, with the cost of public toilets one area identified for a review. A copy of the findings of that group is attached to this report.
- 3.2 With regards King's Lynn, the toilets at the Bus Station, Ferry Street, Baker Lane & the St James Multi-storey car park, were seen as associated with and key parts of parking or transport facilities, with no change to maintenance arrangements recommended. However the group specifically recommended that KLACC give consideration to the future of three public toilet facilities within King's Lynn, namely the facilities at Gaywood, and the two sets of toilets at the Walks. It is understood that the Gaywood toilets have been subject to vandalism and anti-social behaviour in the past, which led to their closure. However they have recently been opened again to the public.

The annual costs of maintaining these three identified toilet facilities is currently:

Gaywood	£9,555
Walks (Broadwalk)	£9,046
Walks (Management building)	£7,302
<b>Total</b>	<b>£25,903</b>

- 3.3 The Committee is asked to consider whether to charge the above toilet facilities to Special Expenses. The costs could be partially off-set by the savings in the allotment charges, although this will still need £17,903 to be charged to Special Expenses, should the total set out above be added to the 2017/18 charge. This off-set would increase as the allotments become self-funding by 2020. The alternative would be to close the facilities, or seek to hand over to third parties if possible.

#### Bus Shelters

- 3.4 Within King's Lynn, excluding the bus station, the bus shelters have been erected and maintained by a company, through a contract that has been running for approximately 15 years. That contract enabled the company to take the advertising revenue from the bus shelters, and in return they provided and maintained them. The contract will be coming to an end early in 2017, and there may be an opportunity to discuss whether the Council can take on the bus shelters, at this time. Members will be aware that within parished areas, bus shelters are usually dealt with by the relevant Parish Council. The views of KLACC on the scenario of the Council seeking to take ownership and maintenance of the bus shelters are sought.

#### **4.0 Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 The recommendations of the Committee relate to how special expenses are spent on the provision of certain services within King's Lynn. As such this fits with the following corporate priorities:

Priority one – provide important local services within our available resources

Priority three – work with our local communities to ensure they remain clean and safe

#### **5.0 Financial Implications**

- 5.1 There will be financial implications associated with the spending of Special Expenses. The implications will depend on the recommendations of the Committee.

#### **6.0 Any other Implications/Risks**

- 6.1 None identified

#### **7.0 Equal Opportunity Considerations**

- 7.1 There are no particular equal opportunity considerations raised by this report.

#### **8.0 Consultation**

- 8.1 Councillors Long and Lawrence, and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the KLACC

#### **9.0 Conclusion**

- 9.1 As part of their terms of reference the King's Lynn Area Consultative Committee (KLACC) can make recommendations on priorities for the expenditure and if appropriate the level of funds to be raised through Special Expenses within King's Lynn.

9.2 This report sets out the background to Special Expenses, along with details of how it is currently charged within the unparished area of King's Lynn, including West Lynn. This includes a breakdown of the current costs.

9.3 The Committee is asked to make recommendations to Cabinet on the King's Lynn Special Expenses, as per their current terms of reference, as well as on the specific issues of the three sets of toilets mentioned in the report, and on the issue of potentially taking on bus shelters.

## **10.0 Background Papers**

Environment & Community Panel Report – Public Toilet Review