



## 2016 / 17 Budget Consultation

### **(a) Street cleaning**

At present Watlington Parish Council gets a grant from SODC to cover the cost of street cleaning in the town. They are proposing reducing this grant or cutting it entirely. Street cleaning costs us about £6,350 a year for seven days a week cleaning in the central area, for which we receive about £5,800 from SODC. We are one of nine parishes in SODC that signed up to this scheme back in 1992 when parishes were first offered the option of taking over their own street cleaning. We have received this payment (with annual reviews) since then. In 2008 SODC changed their contract for street cleaning and awarded BIFFA the contract for street cleaning for all towns and villages in the District. Since then SODC has effectively been paying twice for our streets to be cleaned although in practice BIFFA did no routine cleaning, only annual deep cleansing. SODC cannot change the BIFFA contract because it is based on a national agreement, so they are now suggesting not paying the parishes to do street cleaning. The Corporate Governance section of SODC has recommended that this payment should not continue.

If we drop doing our own cleaning and rely on the contracted service from SODC, the cleaning frequency will drop to once a fortnight, with litter bins emptied once a week. This will inevitably mean that the central area will have more litter around than it would with our present daily cleaning and litter bin emptying.

The options for us are:

- accept the cut in cleaning frequency and reduce our cleaner's hours by a proportionate amount. This will leave our budget unchanged as we will lose both £5,800 income and £5,800 staff costs from central services. It would however have a severe impact on our cleaner's wages;
- accept the cut in cleaning frequency but redeploy our cleaner to other duties such as green space /play equipment maintenance which might achieve savings elsewhere in the budget. This would result in some increase in our budget as it is unlikely that we could achieve savings from other budget items to cover the full amount we currently get for the cleaning;
- arrange a mixed cleaning system where the SODC contractor provided their contracted service (fortnightly cleaning, weekly litter bins) but we supplement this as necessary with additional cleaning carried out from our own budget. This will free up some of our cleaner's time for other tasks, but would result in lesser savings and so a larger increase in the overall budget, (possibly up to £5,800).

Other options are of course possible, and we will not know how much of the £5,800 grant we will lose for a while yet. We will however have to take some decision in the near future so that we can set the 2016 / 17 budget.