

## MARCH 2024 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING MINUTES

The **Annual Parish Meeting** of **Hough on the Hill, Brandon and Gelston** was held on **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024** at All Saints Church, Hough on the Hill and commenced at 7.00p.m.

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor Stewart Sharman presided and opened the meeting with a welcome to those present. There were 7 members of the public present, 4 Parish Councillors, a District Councillor and 1 member of staff.

Apologies were recorded from *Dist Cllr A Maughan, Cllr Rann* and *Cllr McLean*.

1. The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in 2023 were approved and it was unanimously agreed that they be signed.
2. The Chairman gave his report and a copy is attached to a hard copy of these minutes.
3. The Chair gave a financial report and a report is attached to a hard copy of these minutes
4. The annual report of the Hough on the Hill Relief in Need Charity was read out and a copy is attached to the hard copy of these minutes.
5. Parishioners question time. Members of the public were concerned about the roads between Brandon and Hough and Hough to Barkston. Following storm damage there were more potholes, surface mud and shingle on the roads. The Chair advised first port of call Fix My Street and secondly *Cty Cllr A Maughan* to escalate. *Dist Cllr P Milnes* advised that LCC Highways were expecting to get more money next year to do repairs. A member of the public questioned the disappearance of the grassed triangle at the bottom of New Hill going into Lower Road. A member of the public questioned the designation of Hough as a small village having the Brownlow as a pub as it was not always open. *Dist Cllr P Milnes* advised that the timings of its openings are irrelevant to designation as a small village. Opening hours are not assessment criteria merely that it is a key facility open to the community without membership. A member of the public asked about the change to Hough in respect of allocation for housing and development land. *Dist Cllr P Milnes* advised that nothing much had changed since the last Local Plan. A Neighbourhood Plan is given full weight in the decision making process. *Cllr Sharman* had included an update on the Neighbourhood Plan in his report. Members of the public were disappointed with the siting of the BT pole on Water Lane and believed it to be a safety issue. *Cllr Pope* was asked by the Chair to put a post on next door encouraging the village to object as the more objections the better to pursue a positive response.

The meeting closed at 8.01p.m.

---

REPORT ON HOUGH ON THE HILL GELSTON AND BRANDON PC ACTIVITY  
– MAY 23 TILL MAR 24

## INTRODUCTION

1. Following the election of a new PC in May 23 various projects were initiated to define the new Council's first 12 months in office. The aim was firstly to improve the fabric and experience across the Parish but also to focus on positive actions and move away from the toxic environment that had been front and centre for the last few years.

## REPORT

2. Below is a list of what has been achieved by the PC in the first 12 months in office:

- a. All Cllrs have received Parish Council training.
- b. The PC voted unanimously to sign up to and implement the Civility and Respect Pledge.
- c. After 7 years of loyal service Lesley Francis resigned as Parish Clerk. The position was advertised, two candidates applied and were interviewed - Mrs Donna Lang was successful and appointed as the new PC Clerk.
- d. Following storms Bibbet and Henke there was significant flooding across the Parish – primarily in Brandon and Hough on the Hill – with 4 properties flooded across the Parish. In addition, the amount of water flowing through Hough on the Hill was unprecedented resulting in roads being flooded. Whilst it is recognised that Parishioners must report any flooding on Fix My Street, it was felt that the impact on the

Parish required a more united response. To that end the PC have acted as the POC to capture flooding issues, suggest priorities and maximise effort. As a result, the PC hosted a meeting with Cllr Maughan and the Regional Head of Highways (Rowan Smith) to discuss the flooding and deliver practical solutions over the next 12 months – more to follow.

- e. A very successful litter pick was organised by Cllr Pope – this was the first one with more planned before the vegetation begins to grow.
- f. The refurb of the Parish DEFIB assets has been completed - thank you to Cllr's Allen and Rann. Cllr Allen also organised some excellent local DEFIB training which was well attended and well received. As part of the refurb Cllr Allen reviewed and revamped the emergency list – N.B. this is now able to work using mobile phones - which is welcomed.
- g. The flooding issues and revamping of the DEFIBs led onto considering whether the Parish should have an Emergency Plan. The view was that this was an excellent idea and is now being pursued at pace. Templates and examples of best practise have been investigated. The aim is to provide a response from the most minor incidents, to providing support during national emergencies. Key to this will be the DEFIB call out list which can be utilised to cover an Emergency Plan as well.
- h. Following the first draft of the NP and the DC both elements have been revisited to ensure the NP is amended in line with SKDC guidance and that the DC is fit for purpose. The revised draft NP from the independent planner is due 13 Mar 24 and although the PC have been advised that as the amendments were only minor, there is no need for a consultation phase. It has been decided that as the creation of the original draft was so mired in controversy and caused division across the Parish, that the only correct COA was to consult, before submitting to SKDC.
- i. Purchase and placement of a SID – thank you to Andrew Barrett for all of his good work in setting up the SIDs and for moving them around the Parish - well supported by Cllr McLean . It is clear that the single SID has worked well and that more are required - action for 24/25.

- j. The HotH Play Area has been inspected monthly and maintenance works have been carried out as a result of the inspections – new swing, bark surface topped up and the roof on the shelter repaired.
- k. How to best use the Playing field. Ideas have been sought from Parishioners as to how to develop the playing field in HotH. The response has been limited and so it has been agreed to produce some sketch designs for public consultation. In addition, the contractor currently cutting the grass across the parish has resigned – a new supplier is being sought with the aim to improve the cutting regime on the playing field whilst still servicing the PC owned areas.
- l. No contentious Planning Issues.

## Conclusion

3. Despite taking over from a co-opted PC that had been formed due to the collapse of the previous regime, it has been gratifying as to how individual cllrs, all of whom were all elected in May 23, have all taken responsibility to deliver specific projects. The aim was to create a more unified Parish where the PC was seen as an organisation for good. Whilst I believe that what has been achieved so far is a positive start, there is more to do. The Emergency Plan and the Playing fields are areas for further consideration over the next 12 months, but the priority is a concerted and unified approach to the flooding issues across the Parish. In terms of other concerns and or projects we would welcome input from Parishioners.

Yours

Stewart Sharman MBE

Chair

---

## FINANCIAL REPORT March 2024

We have a total bank balance of £9,093.88 to the end of February 2024. Of this, £6,075.50 is in the savings account which is generally held for any major play area repairs or new equipment. Funds continue to be set aside for projects:

Neighbourhood Plan £500, Neighbourhood Plan grant £2550, election expense £700 and defib maintenance of £1580.60.

Other outgoings are ongoing maintenance of the hough website, LALC membership, play area, grass cutting and speed indicator devices.

We had a precept of £8,120 for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

Our precept for this new year is £8,526 an increase of about 5%.

The Parish Council strive to use funds carefully to ensure the parish is maintained in a condition you as residents expect.

The Parish Council will be planning their budget for Financial year 2025/2026 in November 2024 so if you have any ideas for projects please do pass them to us (costings, etc included) prior to this date to allow time for all projects to be considered.

---

## CLLR ALEXANDER MAUGHAN LINCOLNSHIRE CC UPDATE – MARCH 2024



### Flood response in Lincolnshire

Storms Babet and Henk have provided a significant challenge to Council resources as we support residents with requests for help following major floods, and carry out our responsibilities under the Flood and Water Management Act to investigate instances of internal flooding in the County.

Additionally, Highways crews are working through a huge backlog of requests for gully jetting and cleansing, and CCTV drainage surveys. We are also working with Internal Drainage Boards to support enforcement action where landowners have not maintained ditches and other drainage systems that are riparian responsibility.

There are 230 Section 19 flood investigations currently outstanding, and being worked through by the Council's Flood Risk team. Many of these relate to multiple properties and takes the number of internally flooded properties in Lincolnshire as a result of these storms at approximately 400. These reports investigate the cause of flooding and make recommendations to reduce the risk of future flooding, which are shared with responsible agencies including Anglian Water, LCC Highways, Internal Drainage Boards, and local landowners.

Councillors at the budget meeting in February have agreed additional spend on a package of measures to bolster our flood response in Lincolnshire. This will ensure residents receive the support they deserve within an acceptable timescale. The measures agreed by Councillors were as follows:

- **Highways draining and jetting** – additional capacity to reduce the current backlog of reports for drainage jetting and other related requests - **£1,800,000**
- **Flooding team** – additional capacity to process Section 19 investigations and complete all outstanding reports over the coming months - **£215,000**
- **Flooding design work** – additional capacity to increase activity for design work of flood and drainage improvement schemes - **£878,000**
- **Fire and Rescue flood response** – funding for an additional flood pump in the county to support flood response, and new dry suits compliant with modern specifications for our firefighters - **£400,000**

If you have been a victim of flooding to your property (internally) please make sure this is reported on [www.fixmystreet.com](http://www.fixmystreet.com) or email [floodrisk@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:floodrisk@lincolnshire.gov.uk) to ensure you are in the system for a section 19 report. You can also copy my email address [clira.maughan@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:clira.maughan@lincolnshire.gov.uk) so that I can accurately monitor progress of these reports across the 18 villages I represent, and keep you updated.

## Great Gonerby puffin crossing and road resurfacing scheme

The long awaited puffin project crossing is provisionally scheduled to commence in May 2024, with works expected to last around 3 weeks. This work will see replacement and relocation of the existing zebra crossing with a puffin crossing and associated traffic lights, positioned just north of the Long Street/High Street junction.

As part of this works LCC Highways will also be taking the opportunity to carry out a substantial resurfacing scheme to High Street/Grantham Road to improve the road condition here and provide a brand new road surface that lasts for years to come.

Finally, a public consultation which concluded last year also recommended a change to the parking restrictions in place around St Sebastian's School/Pond Street/Long Street. As part of the puffin crossing project the Council will be installing yellow lines at these junctions to improve visibility for pedestrians and motorists.

Further details of these works, and other upcoming works in Grantham, will be made available later this week as the County Council launches an engagement event to keep residents in Great Gonerby and Grantham town updated on a number of major projects taking place this year. These major works include Market Place / Station Approach Changes; Dysart Road Reconstruction; Alma Park Road Reconstruction; Barrowby Road Pedestrian Crossings; and Great Gonerby Resurfacing and Pedestrian Crossing.

The roadworks planned will inevitably cause some disruption to Great Gonerby and the wider area, so this engagement (both physical and online) is important to keep everyone updated and of course take feedback from the public.

Further details to follow from Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March - <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/news>

## Devolution deal for Greater Lincolnshire

A public consultation asking people in Greater Lincolnshire for their views on the devolution proposals agreed between the County Council and the Government has now concluded, with over 4,000 responses collected, the highest level of engagement for any devolution deal in the UK.

A devolution deal will move important funding and choices about local investment, infrastructure and training from Government to local decision makers. It would involve the creation of a Combined Mayoral Authority, covering the region of Greater Lincolnshire from the south bank of the Humber down to the Wash. The authority would be led by a directly elected Mayor, with the leaders of Lincolnshire County Council, North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire Councils also with voting rights and decision making powers.

The Proposal outlines the benefits to Greater Lincolnshire that devolution will bring, which include:

- A Mayoral Investment Fund of £24 million per annum for 30 years to invest in infrastructure and skills development totalling £720m;
- A one off £28.4m capital investment in Greater Lincolnshire's priorities;
- £2m capacity funding over three years;
- £1m skills for job funding;
- Local control over the Adult Education Budget from 2026;
- A consolidated, multi-year transport fund, providing increased financial certainty.

Following the public consultation, a council meeting will take place on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March asking County Councillors to assess the consultation results and put a recommendation to the Government. If a decision is taken to move forward, a Mayoral Combined County Authority would be formed with the election for a Mayor held in May 2025.

## Local plan consultation launched by South Kesteven District Council

Our local District Council has launched a public consultation on their local plan review, which sets out local planning policy and allocated sites for building over the next decade.

Details of the review and consultation portal can be found here:

[https://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/planning- building-control/planning-policy-local-plans/local-plan-review](https://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/planning-building-control/planning-policy-local-plans/local-plan-review)

Lincolnshire County Council is not a decision maker on local planning policy, with our involvement limited to consultation on the local plan review and on individual planning applications as they come forward. South Kesteven District Council and your local District Councillors remain the decision makers in this process.

As County Councillor for Hough Division, I have concerns about the site allocations at Great Gonerby and the Highways impact of another major development on Belton Lane. I would encourage all residents in Great Gonerby to submit their own comments/views on this to the local plan consultation.

### Alexander Maughan

Lincolnshire County Councillor for Hough Division

Mobile: [07707 060 022](tel:07707060022)

Email: [cllra.maughan@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:cllra.maughan@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

---

Hough on the Hill Parish Council 7 March 2024

Report of District Councillor Penny Milnes

### SKDC Local Plan Review – Draft Local Plan

The long-awaited review of the Local Plan, governing planning in the District, is currently out for consultation. The Plan has to concur with the latest NPPF – currently December 2023.

I believe it is very important for the Parish Council **and** individual residents to comment at this stage - deadline Thursday 25th April 2024. There is a quick link to the consultation and the Plan on the SK website bottom of the Home page. It is a very important planning policy document for the District, our villages and countryside.

The main issues affecting Hough on the Hill remain relatively unchanged.

Hough remains a smaller village as there is a pub – please note the definition of a pub used by the policy makers is that:

‘The Settlement Hierarchy Review systematically assesses each settlement against a range of criteria. The methodology used was considered robust by the examining Inspector of the adopted Local Plan. Smaller village status is assessed as the settlement having more than 30 dwellings and 1 key facility (Shop, Primary School, Village Hall, Public House); or within a 10-minute walk to a key facility (i.e. neighbouring village).

Hough on the Hill continues to identify as a Smaller Village based on having more than 30 dwellings, and a public house. The ‘walking distance’ criterion is only applied, if a settlement does not have a key facility, but is within walking distance of a key facility. Regarding the definition of a pub, if the establishment is open to the community without a membership fee (such as a social club), then it is considered to be a key facility. Opening hours and if a facility is well used are not assessment criteria.

Slightly edited policies SP3 – Infill, SP4 Edge of Village, and SP5 Open Countryside – changed to Outside Settlements - are



the most pertinent relating to any development applications. Note that Gelston and Brandon are classed as Outside Settlements and SP5 remains relevant.

The Draft Local Plan proposes to change the title of Policy SP5 to 'Development Outside of Settlements' to make clear that the policy does not only apply to the open countryside but also to those settlements not included in policy SP2: Settlement Hierarchy (such as Gelston and Brandon). Policy SP5 continues to apply to all development *not* included as a defined settlement set out in policy SP2 which categorises settlements into towns, larger villages and smaller villages. Any settlements outside of these defined categories will continue to be subject to policy SP5, which restricts development.

The term 'affordable housing' creates a lot of confusion but majorly eligible people are those on the Council Register. The definition in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is:

#### Annex 2: Glossary

Affordable housing: housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions<sup>81</sup>:

a) Affordable housing for rent: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).

b) Starter homes: is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household's eligibility to purchase a starter home to

those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.

c) Discounted market sales housing: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

d) Other affordable routes to home ownership: is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement

The Gypsy and Traveller issue is difficult and will continue to prove contentious in the rural area as no sites have been put forward for these uses. The Council have a duty to allocate land for these purposes as there is an identified and growing need; hence a further call for sites has been issued.

Due to receiving no Gypsy, Traveller or Travelling Showpeople sites through the first call for sites exercise, no sites are proposed for allocation through the Draft Local Plan to meet the need identified in policies H5 and H6 of the Draft Local Plan. However, alongside consultation on the Draft Plan we have also launched another Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Call for Sites. Any sites received will be considered at the next stage of plan preparation (pre-submission), which will also be consulted on.

In the interim, we remain vulnerable to unauthorized sites being set up. When a planning application has been submitted, criteria have been inserted into Policy SP5 which detail that Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation sites will be supported in the open countryside. This leaves it wide open, albeit subject to compliance with Policy H5, Gypsy and Traveller and Policy H6, Showpeople but with a new, very welcome, requirement to consider design, scale and layout.

Another contentious issue are the many applications for large solar farms on agricultural land and the impact on food security. It is useful that certain criteria have been included in the policy.

RE1: Renewable Energy Generation Proposals for renewable energy generation will be supported subject to meeting the detailed criteria as set out in the accompanying Renewable Energy document (currently an Appendix of the adopted Local Plan) and provided that:

- a. The proposal does not negatively impact the District's agricultural Land asset;
- b. The proposal can demonstrate the support of affected local communities;
- c. The proposal includes details for the transmission of power produced;
- d. The proposal details that all apparatus related to renewable energy production will be removed from the site when power production ceases; and
- e. That the proposal complies with any other relevant Local Plan policies and national planning policy.

You will note that Landscape impacts, whilst considered, are not given high priority – hence the need for the NP policies.

Please comment on how you see these policies affecting the parish. May I add that it is also important that individual residents send in their own responses to the consultation.

### Neighbourhood Plan Review

I hope progress is made with the Neighbourhood Plan Review which currently remains out of date with the policies in the Adopted Local Plan and the Draft Local Plan. There will always be policy changes and reviews are essential as these roll though. It is an opportunity to put local influence on how any development in the parish proceeds, has the same status as

the Local Plan as a democratic document (residents having been engaged and part of the process resulting in a referendum). It also informs relevant responses to planning applications. There are now 16 Neighbourhood Plans in South Kesteven. It is crucial to appreciate that a Neighborhood Plan is a community document and should not merely reflect a majority interest of parish council members.

### The Brandon Shoot Appeal.

An appeal has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate against an Enforcement Notice following the refusal of planning permission for 150 days and a contested breach of planning permission "00/00471/71 for 50 days. No date has been set but it will be a Hearing in the offices at Grantham.

Ref: APP/E2530/C/24/3337083 &3337084

The application, S20/0098 was refused for the following reasons:

1. It has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the shooting noise management plan will reduce adverse noise impact to a level which would be appropriate to justify the proposed use of land for 150 shooting days. The noise impacts associated with the current position and fall-back position are acknowledged, however, it is considered that the proposed increase in the number of shooting days would result in an adverse impact on the amenity of local residents. The proposal is therefore contrary to Local Plan Policies SD1, E5e, E7c, EN4 and DE1b, Stubton Neighbourhood Plan Policy NE1 and the National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 185.

Hough PC Comments: (Note that all 5 PC's in the Ward objected)

The Parish Council's previous objection to application S20/0098 (attached) stands. As previously noted: Using karting noise to 'mask' the noise of shooting is nonsense since low intensity karting occurs most days, the character of the noise is quite different, and the noise impact on 'receptors' is cumulative. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) guidance states that planning permission should not be granted for a shoot if the mean noise level exceeds 55dB. This is the maximum; shooting noise can cause annoyance at much lower levels. The involvement of SKDC Environmental Health in the plan to ignore the CIEH limit and to increase the number of days/hours of shooting was highly questionable. The following are further comments on the associated 'Shooting Noise Management Plan': A model to predict noise level is useless unless it allows for: • Wind, other atmospheric conditions (humidity, temperature gradient etc) and ground conditions • Direction of shooting and variability of direction •

The actual / worst-case combination of gun and cartridge The proposal for a one-off test to validate the model is unacceptable since:

- This will only exercise the model under a single condition
- SKDC has no control over the parameters used in the model, nor how it will be used

The only mitigation offered is vary the position and direction of shooting, not to restrict the type of shooting, the type of cartridge or the operating hours. Changing the direction/location of shooting will just move the noise concentration to another village/hamlet. The mitigation is based on the risk (low/medium/high) of the shooting noise exceeding the (unacceptable) noise limits. Surely if there is any risk of exceeding these limits, and hence breaching planning conditions, shooting should not occur. The monitoring and mitigation procedures are vague, based on avoiding the (undefined) high risk of exceeding the maximum predicted noise level. The 'respite' provided by wind is misleading. Under calm conditions the background noise levels are even lower than usual and the whole locality is affected equally. And even with moderately high winds, shooting noise is still loud outside the narrow 'positive vector' arc. If shooting is allowed 150 days a year it will be heard 150 days a year throughout the local area. The only effect of varying wind and shoot direction is the difference between the noise being overpowering and it being merely annoying. The distance to receptor sites is measured from the centre of the site, not the nearest shoot location. It includes Fulbeck Grange (1.9km) but ignores the village of Brandon, which has 47 households, the nearest of which is 1.9cm from Stand 3. Also note there are several properties at Fulbeck Grange, Court Leys and on Stubton Road, near Lodge Farm. The noise prediction, monitoring, mitigation and complaints procedures are to be wholly policed by the applicant, with no opportunity for the public or SKDC to view them, let alone check them. This is unacceptable as the applicant has already amply demonstrated a willingness to ignore the rules. In summary: The proposed conditions would allow shooting for many hours a day, 150 days a year. This would impact the lives of residents in several local villages, many of whom are retired or now work from home. The proposed noise levels far exceed the maximum levels recommended by the CIEH (65dB is perceived as twice as loud as the 55dB maximum). The proposed mitigation is to predict the noise levels using an undefined model and then attempt to keep the levels just within these limits, by effectively moving some of the noise to another village. The model will not be analysed and the proposed validation is inadequate. The village of Brandon is not included in the list of receptor sites. The 'noise management' and complaints procedures would be wholly policed by the applicant, with no oversight from SKDC. The original permission on this site was a for private use, for a limited number of days/hours, under strict conditions. The latest application would vastly increase the frequency, duration, and noise level of shooting, with no benefit to the community. The impacts on residents would be widespread and severe. Impacts which, even in the unlikely event of it being complied with, the 'Noise Management Plan' would do little or nothing to mitigate.

### New Leader of SKDC

In January Cllr Richard Cleaver announced that he was stepping down as Leader. An election took place and Cllr Ashley Baxter narrowly defeated

Cllr Graham Jeal – Leader of the SK Coalition of which I am a member. This highlights how finely balanced the Council became after the May elections last year. I pushed for a more equally balanced and responsible representation across the Council to better serve the electoral outcome within our large and diverse District with a potential rural urban divide.

## Council Tax

The District Council element of the Council Tax has been set to rise by 3.1% which equates to £171.81 for a Band D property in this parish. The parish precept (£8526pa) which will then be £220.50 addition on the tax bill.

Consultation was carried out around the District, and 792 responses were received! 48% agreed with the rise; 46.2% didn't and 5.8% didn't know/not sure. The consultation process has been improved by utilising the email addresses of resident who have agreed to receive Hello SK digitally and agreed to participate in consultations. I strongly recommend residents to take advantage of this scheme.

The total Council Tax bill includes precepts from LCC – £1578.69 an increase of 5%, LPCC - £304.20 an increase of 4.4% = £1882.89 plus the £220.50 parish precept =

Grand total: £2103.39 for Band D.

## The Budget

The Council is required to set a balanced budget. It is aligned with the ambitions of the Council's Corporate Plan and the Vision to be 'a thriving District to live in, work and visit'. Whilst the plan was approved in January 2024, I have concerns around how realistic, affordable and the wider implications are for some of the recommendations, particularly around climate change.

The context is significant financial external events which have had a detrimental impact – increased inflation, energy prices and employee pay proposals. The cost-of-living crisis has the potential to increase demand for council services. The financial future and risks remain uncertain, but the Budget Stabilisation

Reserve can fund short term pressures if needed however it is not a long term approach.

A capital loan of £8 million for a new depot for the bin lorries has been approved to replace the current site which is no longer fit for purpose. It is hoped that the land could be sold for development in the future.

The council has approved somewhat controversially a Fair Tax Policy for SKDC to use only companies for our investments that do not have tax avoidance policies. This was not costed and has unknown outcomes. Unlike tax evasion, tax avoidance is perfectly legal.

Leisure SK, which runs our 3 leisure centres in the District, have been granted £447K to help them through a difficult financial situation due mainly to difficult trading conditions post covid and financial challenges ranging from increased utility costs to staffing costs.

Furthermore, after a vigorous debate, £850k was agreed to 'gift' as a subsidy to the Deepings Leisure Centre which closed in 2021 as unaffordable refurbishment was required. A Community Interest Company has been formed by residents and including the new Leader and councillors to try and reopen the centre. Fortunately, the money has been severely caveated before any release as there are concerns around the feasibility of the plans and complications with LCC's intentions as owner of the building.

## Bins

The rollout of the purple lidded bins appears to have gone well. However, there are issues with the silver bins. For example, if there was just one small item wrong eg crisp packet or a sock in a bin the bin was rejected. Some 6000 bins were rejected ending in 'bingate' with so called tags of shame. The council waste operatives and office staff suffered significant abuse and the Chief Executive called a halt and arranged for the discarded bins to be recollected. Even so, contamination rates and non-acceptance at the recycling centre were high despite education

on Right Thing Right Bin. Please ensure that only dry clean paper and card go into the purple lidded bin and be very careful with the contents of your silver bin. If in doubt put the item into the black bin. I believe that the silver bin issue was introduced too soon, and advice was ignored. Caveated apologies were made, and more education and more time will now be allowed for people to get on board with the requirements. Unfortunately, there will always be a part of our society that doesn't care and contaminates with dirty nappies and dirty food packaging etc – what to do?

---

## **HOUGH-ON-THE-HILL RELIEF IN NEED CHARITY**

### ANNUAL REPORT TO THE PARISH COUNCIL 2023-2024

#### Financial Report

In 2023 the Charity's income was £1360 and expenditure £1140, principally made up of 17 grants to eligible households in the Parish. Considering the fiscal pressure felt by all, it was felt prudent to increase the grant amount distributed at Christmas 2023 to £65. The balance carried forward from 2022 was £1601 and forward into 2024 was £1823.

Whilst reserve funds have grown in the last 2-3 years, the Trustees have resolved to try to publicize the existence of the fund more widely to attract requests for assistance from those in real hardship. It is hoped that Parishioners with demonstrable need will feel they can engage with Trustees in confidence to explain their need and seek appropriate support from the Charity, albeit we can only help in a modest manner.

In light of the above-mentioned financial pressures and specifically given the increasing rise in funeral costs, the Trustees have committed to making a grant payment to families in the Parish who have suffered a bereavement of a Parish resident, irrespective of 'need'. If parishioners have suffered in this way (or if you know of someone in this situation), please do contact the Charity.

#### Trustees

The last 12 months have seen several Trustee changes.

Our Chair Dr. Robert Mills indicated mid-year that he intended to resign as did Mrs. Jean Russell. Revd. Stuart Hadley also gave notice of his impending retirement during 2023.



The Trustees elected Andrew Barrett to serve as Chair for the following year and our new Vicar Revd. Sara Davies took over in the ex-officio position. New Trustees who joined were Mrs. Judith Sharman and Mrs. Susan Allen.

Lastly Mrs. Cate Ingham (Secretary) gave notice that she was intending to move away from the area and Mrs. Janet Chapman has now (as of Feb 2024) taken over as Secretary.

The current list of Trustees is as follows:

Mrs. Susan Allen

Mr. Andrew Barrett (Chair)

Mrs. Janet Chapman (Secretary)

Revd. Sara Davies

Mr. Pat Morgan

Mrs. Judith Sharman

Andrew Barrett