



RUSKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24



Chairman of Ruskington Parish Council Annual Report for 2023/24

Cllr Owen Ditch

Introduction

Having completed my first full year as Chairman of the Ruskington Parish Council (RPC), this is my second Annual Report. Now, with 'coal-face' experience under my belt, I hope to provide a more informed account of our achievements and challenges during the previous year as well as sharing with you our aspirations for the future – especially within the areas of Recreation and the Environment.

Last year promised so much: COVID had all but disappeared; His Majesty, King Charles III's Coronation took place and numerous impromptu and organised Street Parties were staged; then in June, hundreds of us gathered on the Parkfield Playing Fields to enjoy a Family Funday introducing us to new essential life techniques such as Sausage Throwing – who knew? It was just the antidote we needed after a few miserable years.

But there was to be a sting in the tail and within a few short months, Storms Babet and Henk served to remind us of the power of Mother Nature and that Climate Change is very real. On 20 October, two months' worth of rain fell in one day overwhelming the already saturated surrounding fields causing 'run-off' to raise the level of the Beck by almost 1.5 metres above its normal level. Scores of properties were severely flooded causing extensive damage, severe hardship and distress for many. There can be few positives to take from such catastrophic events, but as I covered in a subsequent social media report and in the Spring Edition of the Village Signpost magazine, the community spirit shown during these events was exceptional: from those who helped the RPC fill and distribute 20 tons of sandbags, to the road traffic marshals, the local shops who provided refreshments at no cost, and the 'door-knockers' who checked on the welfare of those affected. Many post-flood investigations have already taken place and the RPC has collated local reports and organised village visits, notably, on 10 April 2024, Flood Mary and the Floodmobile will be visiting the Co-op carpark for the day to display and discuss practical flood protection interventions for homes and businesses and community venues.

As a village, we continue to grow with a population of around 6000 residents and a rapidly increasing housing stock in excess of 2000 dwellings, numbers that mean Ruskington is one of the largest villages in Lincolnshire and as such, is categorised as a 'Large Parish or Small Town'. The RPC has no direct influence on what is built, as we receive all applications through the NKDC who are ultimately guided by the requirements of the Lincolnshire Central Plan and the more global direction of the Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities. We have, however – with some success - commented on potential developments questioning noise pollution issues, the capacity of local infrastructure, the suitability of building plots in light of the recent flooding events, the suitability of roads and footpaths and the need to incorporate 'affordable housing'. Once agreed buildings materialise, the RPC does get increased 'Precept' receipts – (that's the small percentage of the Council Tax that the RPC receives to provide the services described in this Report) but we also receive a 'one-off' Community Infrastructure Levy receipt based on the size and number of new dwellings, income that must be spent on Community Projects.

People

As reported last year, RPC lost 3 experienced Parish Councillors reducing our numbers from 10 to 7 of the 13 established posts. We have since recruited one more which still leaves us with 5 vacancies. Being a Parish Councillor can be a very rewarding pastime and is not as intimidating as you may think. There is no entrance exam or formal interview, simply an informal chat with the RPC Clerk and one of the Councillors to see if we're right for each other. It's not necessary to have any particular skills: some of our teams are happy to write reports and make presentations, while others are happier working in a more informal setting as part of a project review initiative. There's a place for everyone as long as you're over 18, on the Electoral Roll, have lived in the village for a year or more and have no unspent criminal convictions. If you're interested, ask the RPC Clerk for a copy of our jargon-free informative booklet. Full training will be provided at no cost.

New Team Members. Cllr Dave Conway was co-opted to Council in June 2023. Dave is an exile from 'Down South' so had to be quarantined for 12 months before he could join us. He has a wealth of experience having run his own businesses, experience in the building trade and has managed teams of support staffs in high-end London hotels. He is an active member of the HR Committee and Estate Management Committee.

Team Success.

This year our Parish Clerk, Kathryn Locke - and I - on behalf of the RPC, were proud to accept the coveted award of 'The Best Large Council' as voted for by the Lincolnshire Authority for Local Councils (LALC). In addition, our Deputy Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer – Kirsty Sinclair, was runner-up in the Parish Clerk of the year category. Such accolades are not easily achieved and reflect a tremendous 'Team' effort across all RPC activities. It's easy to recognise those in the public-eye as the contributors to this achievement, so I'd like to put on record my personal thanks to the office cleaner, the litter pickers, the dog-poo-picker-uppers, the grounds maintenance and environmental caretakers without whom the Councillors, Parish Clerk, finance and administrative team simply could not function. Congratulations to all for an exceptional team effort.

Human Resources and Communications

The Human Resources Committee plays a pivotal role in ensuring the effective management of the RPC Team. Under the governance of the RPC HR Policy, it meets as required (but at least annually), to address various issues such as recruitment, training, performance management and employees' relations. A notable achievement this year was the comprehensive review of staff Pensions scheme with the aim of aligning our staff with those who enjoy the benefits of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

The Communications Working Group has developed a comprehensive Communications Strategy aiming to engage with our Parishioners through several platforms, both electronic and more traditional methods. The recent establishment of an administrative assistant has

done much to achieve our aims and future plans will undoubtedly build on this early success. Already community engagement has improved and joint initiatives with schools and local businesses have proved very successful.

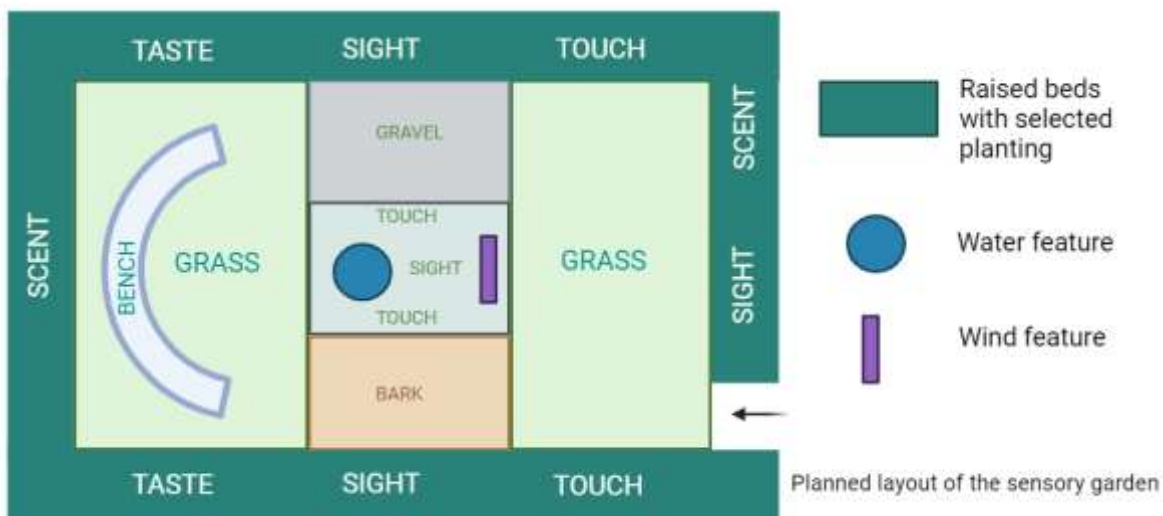
Environmental Issues

Community Garden

Following consultation with Lincolnshire Co-op, an area of unused grass beside the Co-op carpark (see below) is being leased to enable an accessible extension of the community garden. This will include a sensory garden, vegetable plots, and areas for activities and picnics. This is an addition to the existing garden with its community orchard of fruit trees and will bring the community together whilst offering a free food project and improving the environment and biodiversity. Funding from *Quickline* is enabling the development of the sensory area of the garden.



The project is already taking place: the area has been fenced off; native hedging has been planted along the back of the garden; and work has started on the layout of the raised beds and sensory garden. The diagram below illustrates the plan which we hope to open to the public in late Spring.



Nature Reassignment Projects

During the last 12 months, our Village has experienced two significant flooding episodes serving to remind us the power of Mother Nature and just how vulnerable we are to such events. Whilst high-level plans and reviews are underway to look at causal and preventative measures, there is little doubt that 'climate change' is real and we must all do our bit. For our part, the Environmental Caretaker and Committee have continued to re-establish natural habitat areas throughout the village the main benefits being:

- To provide food, wood, shelter, shade, and aesthetic beauty for humans and animals.
- To absorb carbon dioxide and other pollutants in the air, improving air quality and reducing greenhouse gases.
- To slow down and absorb rainwater, reducing the risk of flooding and soil erosion.
- To cool the environment and provide shade, saving energy and preventing excessive heat.

Tree Planting and Nature We have also undertaken a comprehensive tree and hedgerow planting program and have been fortunate to receive 'grants' to assist with these initiatives as can be seen in the Tables below:

Categories of Planting by Location					
Category	Year	Number	Location Planted	Supplier	Cost to RPC
Tree	2021	165	Horseshoe Hollow (HH)	Woodland Trust	Nil
Tree	2021	19	Playing Fields & HH	LCC Treescape	Nil
Tree	2021	40	HH	Environment SK	Nil
Tree/Hedge	2022	800	HH	Conservation Volunteers	Nil
Tree/Hedge	2023	1650	HH & Adjacent to RPC Sensory Garden	Conservation Volunteers	Nil
2669 Trees and Hedge Plants at no cost to RPC					
Environmental Project Funding					
Donor	Amount (£)	Purpose	Comments		
Quickline	1250.00	Sensory Garden	Co-op leased land		
CiL Receipt	1000.00	Community Garden	Ongong project		
Home from Homecare	600.00	Community Garden	Homecare Volunteers to assist with garden creation		
LCC Wildlife Scheme	190.00	Yellow Rattle HH			

All Saints Churchyard.

The planned naturalising of the churchyard continues and the initial reluctance to the project by a minority of our community has subsided as visible progress has become evident. Whilst still not the 'finished' article, information boards (image below) at each entrance to the church are now in place which have done much to satisfy the initial doubters who wished to see short mown grass throughout the site. The initially vigorous grasses have been tamed by the addition of yellow rattle - a parasitic plant that steals nutrients from grass - reducing their growth.

Over time we hope to see more species which we hope will naturally become established.



All Saints Parish Church

'The Living Churchyard' project

The church and the parish council are embarking on an exciting project to bring the churchyard to life, creating a sanctuary for the living and the dead. We believe the churchyard should be a haven for plants and animals, as well as a pleasant and reflective area for the congregation and visitors.

Encouraging biodiversity


Churchyards and burial grounds often contain 'time capsule quality' soil which has avoided the plough and has been unfertilized, essentially 'sleeping meadows' that can wake up under the right conditions. By mowing less frequently and removing grass cuttings we aim to recreate a biodiverse wildflower meadow that will benefit pollinators and other insects. This, in turn, will provide food for bats, shrews and birds, including our local summer visitors, the swifts.



What are we doing?

- **Mowing less frequently** - this will encourage flowers and discourage coarse grasses. We will mow along the boundary and next to the paths to ensure ease of access and visibility.
- **Sowing locally sourced seeds** – Lincolnshire Yellow Rattle seeds have been sown to reduce the vigour of the grasses. Local wildflower seeds will be sought to enhance other areas over time.
- **Installing bat and swift boxes** – we will create homes for our local bats and swifts to increase the population size of these declining species.

A selection of the beautiful flowers already recorded in our churchyard: from left to right, Hoary plantain, Common Knapweed, Pyramidal Orchid, Harebell, Common Cat's ear, Oxeye Daisy, Bulbous Buttercup and Yellow Oat-grass



Horseshoe Hollow – the new information boards for Horseshoe Hollow (see page 7) were installed by our caretakers in late summer 2023, one at each of the 3 entrances. We have been managing the Hollow for the benefit of wildlife and people. The Hollow is a flood meadow (see below) with the village Beck running through it before it exits under Manor Road heading to the South before canalising Eastwards through the centre of the village between High Street North and South. Historically, the Hollow would always have been seasonally flooded but recent weather events have proved the water holding capacity is at the very limit. Previous activities such as mowing the Hollow grass short on a regular basis and keeping the Beck clear of debris actually reduced its ability to store water, as it encouraged water to run quickly off the land and into the Beck channel. This fast-flowing water then flooded downstream where the Beck has been canalised. Our new Hollow regime is to allow the grasses to grow longer and to plant trees and hedges, so that more water can be stored thereby slowing its flow into the village.



The mowing regime introduced last year for Horseshoe Hollow, involving the cutting and collection of material to reduce soil fertility, has had the desired effect. The cutting contractor has good ecological knowledge and the materials from the twice-yearly cuts are bailed and collected by a local farmer resulting in a cost-effective and ecologically sound outcome. The banks of the Beck within the Hollow area are being managed with the welfare of our resident water voles in mind.

Horseshoe Hollow

What is Horseshow hollow?

This area is a seasonally flooded water meadow. By letting the beck flood here in winter, we reduce the risk of flooding elsewhere in the village.

Making space for nature and people

This green space at the heart of our village provides access to natural areas for the community to enjoy. With careful management, we hope to encourage more wildlife to use this space too.

Encouraging biodiversity

A range of habitats will provide homes for lots of different plants and animals. These include:

1. Hedgerows and areas of 'scrub'
2. Wildflower meadows
3. The beck and its margins
4. Woodland

Woodland

Growing trees lock up carbon and provide roosting sites for birds and bats. A mature oak tree can support over 2300 species!
What are we doing? We are planting extra trees in the woodland area and maintaining a walkway through them. We will create an interactive trail with information for the different tree species.



Hedgerows and areas of 'scrub'

Hedges, scrub and tussocky grasses will provide shelter for small mammals, rabbits and birds. Hundreds of rare species of plants insects and birds in the UK rely on this habitat.
What are we doing? The hedges will be thinned by side cutting, while the scrub and tussocky grasses will develop naturally. These areas will only be cut every few years.



Wildflower meadows

The UK has lost over 95% of its wildflower meadows, which provide homes for rare plants, support a huge variety of insects and attract ground-nesting mammals, reptiles, birds and bats.

What are we doing? We are only mowing twice a year and spreading the cuttings to reduce the nitrogen content, making space for wildflowers.



The beck and its margins

The insecton beck is home to water voles, which are an endangered species and protected by law. It also has water plants such as yellow flag iris and vertical margin species, such as flag iris.

What are we doing? We are reducing access to the banks of the beck, allowing the plants to grow to provide food and shelter for the water voles.



Ruskington Parish Council

Further plans for Horseshoe Hollow include the development of a Nature Trail in the southwest quarter, including a woodland path and tree identification trail for children. We also plan to renew of a footbridge crossing the Beck and to improve the hedging along the northern boundary. 695 trees have been planted along the eastern boundary (mostly Hawthorne), hedging was introduced to the northeast corner and an oak tree was planted in the southern area. Going forwards we would like to encourage a community 'Friends of Horseshow Hollow' group that could help with elements of the management plan.

Other Environmental Initiatives

Energy Saving Initiatives. In addition to the measures described, the RPC is relentless in its pursuit to lessen its impact on the environment. As such, by applying for various grants and donations, we have commissioned the installation of Solar Panels on our Sports Changing Rooms and Parish Office, replaced our Parish van with an EV alternative and fitted our buildings with infrared heating panels that operate only when areas are occupied.

Memorial Garden. A new tree was planted in memory of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to mirror the tree planted for Prince Phillip. New planting is gradually being introduced. We plan to re-lay the gravel area within the Memorial Garden and remove the outer paths which are not well used.

Litter and the NKDC Litter Picking Grant. The perennial problems with the irresponsible discharging of litter and the failure of some dog owners to remove faeces continues on public paths, highways, open spaces, play areas and sports fields. As reported on numerous occasions, members of the RPC maintenance team spend many hours to rectify this problem which diverts them from other duties and increases the cost to you, the taxpayer.

In the hope of getting the message home, in the next couple of months, the RPC admin staff will be approaching schools in the hope of recruiting our budding artists to create an innovative and creative Dog Poo Poster and the winning entries will be displayed around the village acknowledging the winners – there may even be a small prize!



In the meantime, we remain grateful to the enthusiastic group of volunteers who routinely help to collect litter throughout the village.

Acknowledgement. Ruskington Parish Council works with NKDC to remove and prevent littering and dog fouling incidents in the village, and gratefully acknowledges the NKDC Annual Litter Picking Grant which goes towards the equipment, additional bins, and people power to keep Ruskington clean, tidy, safe and litter and dog poo free.

Training

Cemetery. Regulations about plot size, acceptable adornments, permissible materials, headstone size, safety checks and scores of other things are mandated by statute and our caretakers and staff are responsible for enforcing those regulations. In April this year Ruskington has been selected to host centrally funded cemetery training day for which 2 of our staff will receive free training places. Keep an eye on the RPC website for updates on this subject or call in the office for more information.

Chainsaw Training. The Environment Caretaker will undertake chainsaw and woodland maintenance training, the cost of which will be amortised within this Financial Year and deliver significant savings in subsequent years as the requirements for expensive contractual services will not be required.

Recreational Matters

Introduction The sporting fields and recreation areas within our village were not spared the impacts of the flooding events as an extremely high-water table rendered the fields unusable. The planned grounds maintenance program could not commence as the ground was not sufficiently firm to accommodate heavy equipment leading to the cancellation of some sporting events. An initial evaluation of the areas suggests local initiatives may alleviate some of the impacts of future storms, but it is thought that a more strategic review will be required during the coming months if a sustainable solution is to be found.

Play Areas. The refurbished Parkfield play area continues to be well-used and, despite attempts by budding graffiti artists to customise the décor, it remains a fully functional and very popular addition to our Play Park facilities. Regular safety checks by RPC Caretakers identified the requirement for minor height and tension adjustments to the zip wire, but timely action soon rectified these issues.

Work continues to identify further sources of funding to improve other village recreational services which will include a review of play park facilities on the Hillside Estate - once land ownership issues are resolved - and a similar review for the Elmtree play area.

The RPC has already replaced the perimeter fence around the Beckside play park to meet current RoSPA safety requirements.

Training All RPC staff undertake three yearly training in the visual inspection of the play areas and play equipment and in 2023, the Buildings and Playground Caretaker became qualified to undertake these inspections.



Community Café and Pavilion Refurbishment. Plans for the continued development of a community café and the Pavilion building continue with initial consultation feedback showing great support for this initiative. Students and staff from Lincoln University have provided a portfolio of diagrams and artists' impressions of what could be achievable (example below) which are available on the RPC Website. Further 'end-user' consultation will take place over the coming year although the final decision will depend on support for the project and available funding: the greater the support, the more likely funding will be available. Currently, the café kitchen has been partially refurbished and received Local Authority Environmental Health certification allowing the service of refreshments to sports teams and their supporters.



- ① PROPOSED NEW KITCHEN.
- ② CHANGING ROOMS.
- ③ KITCHEN
- ④ CHANGING ROOM.
- ⑤ PROPOSED DISABLED ACCESS TOILETS BODY CHANGE WITH EXTERNAL ENTRANCE.
- ⑥⑦ TO MAKE 1 ROOM WITH EXTERNAL ENTRY FOR RFL STORE
- ⑧ PROPOSED NEW LADIES W/C
- ⑨ PROPOSED STAFF W/C.

- ④ + ⑧ PROPOSED WALLS TO BE REMOVED TO OPEN UP SEATING AREA.
- C-F PROPOSED SITE FOR NEW WINDOWS & SERVING HATCH WITH LOWER SWITCHERS.



Recently, the Recreation Team conducted a further evaluation of the possible internal modification to the Pavilion recommending adjustments as per the above diagram

Parish Office



The rear of the building was, for many years, a residential property and until a few weeks ago retained its circa 1970s kitchen and bathroom.

Becoming “homeless” at the end of its previous office lease, Council rented then purchased the property at 7-9 High Street following a public consultation, government borrowing approval, and a loan from North Kesteven District Council.

It was clear from the beginning that the property and its large garden offered possibilities for the village and its residents, and following community support a community garden was developed and planning permission obtained to renovate the parish office (which had no kitchen and a toilet in a cupboard) and convert the rear of the building into 4 office spaces, with a shared waiting / meeting area, kitchen and accessible toilet. Removing the office toilet and toilet wall has provided a link between the front and rear of the offices and allows the council staff to have access to a toilet and a kitchen. The wall dividing two small upstairs rooms above the office will be removed to allow space to hold committee meetings. Furthermore, heating panels will be installed as currently there is no heating in the parish office (apart from two climate control units).

With planning permission achieved, building regulations approved, and the building contractor chosen following a tender process, the renovation and conversion commenced on 25 September 2023 and is still underway.

Once the rear offices are ready for use, they will be leased to local businesses on a long term, short term, or occasional use basis which supports small businesses and those business owners working from their kitchen table and will also bring in revenue for the village and village projects.

So far, areas of new roof have been repaired or replaced by a local roofing company, and six solar panels have been installed on the office roof to provide heating and lighting by a local electrician, the broadband has been upgraded, the kitchen and bathrooms have been ripped out, new doors hung and the electrics and heating are being updated improved throughout. New windows, plastering, decorating, and flooring throughout are all yet to come. So, it should now last another couple of hundred years and provide the Village with a valuable asset.

Estate Management and Planning (EMP) Committee Report – Areas of Responsibility

- The Parish Office, its outbuildings, and grounds (including the community garden).
- The public toilets on Church Street (*leased to the RPC from NKDC*)
- The wreath shelter in the Memorial Garden. *The Memorial Garden Paths will be undergoing maintenance this year, to remove some of the excess gravel and to introduce plastic matting to create a firmer and more stable paths. This will help keep the gravel within the confines of the paths and provide a more stable footing.*
- The cemetery, Lych gate, and the closed churchyard. *The Lych gate Canopy is currently schedule for Repairs at a cost approx. £1,140.00 ex VAT.*
- The war memorial in the cemetery
- The pavilion and changing rooms

Many of the activities pertaining to the above are covered in various other reports such as Environment and Recreation but the EMP retains overall responsibility maintenance, repair, and renovation as needed as well as handling procurement of services and contractors for any projects related to them.

While not currently under this committee the Pavilion and Changing rooms are currently scheduled for renovation works. Solar panels will be fitted to the changing rooms to supply hot water and power across to the pavilion (subject to current Grant application)

Further work is the planned to upgrade the pavilion and incorporate a community Café, again this work will hopefully be aided by Grant application backed by Public consultations.

The closed church yard surrounding the church falls under the Parish council for maintenance, under the direction and wishes of the Church of England. The church yard headstones along with those in the Sleaford Road cemetery are also subjected to regular Safety checks.

Planning:

The committee reviews and comments on planning applications that affect the parish. It also organizes public meetings to gather feedback from residents on controversial applications. It works closely with the Parish Clerk and other relevant agencies to represent the interests of the parish.

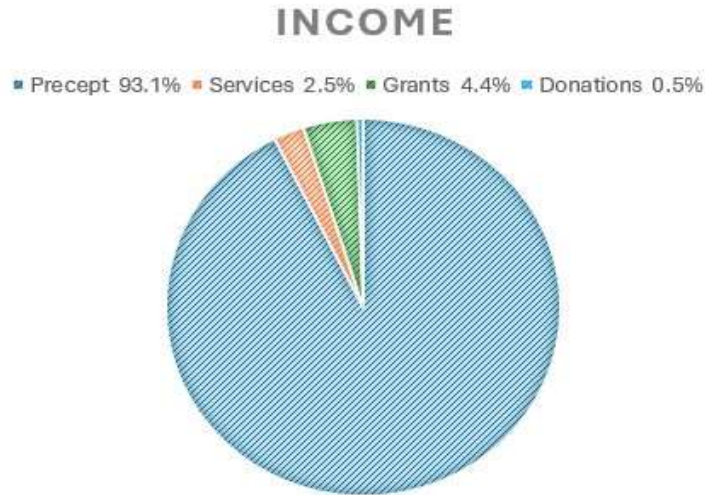
While we can only offer an opinion on behalf of the village and have no say in the decision, we aim to make valid and planning relevant comments to help gain the best outcome.

The number of houses in the village continues to increase with the Developments on Lincoln Road ongoing and the new development off Whitehouse Road also having recently started. The Parish Council will continue to offer its voice to help where we can to steer these and any

future plans in line with the Planning Guidelines for Lincolnshire, and to add in a positive way to our village and its residents.

Finance

Council finances remain in a good and stable state enabling us to meet our commitments and obligations to the community. The achievement of this objective is thanks to the policies adopted over many years. The Finance Committee of the Council prepared a budget which was approved at the January meeting of the full Council.

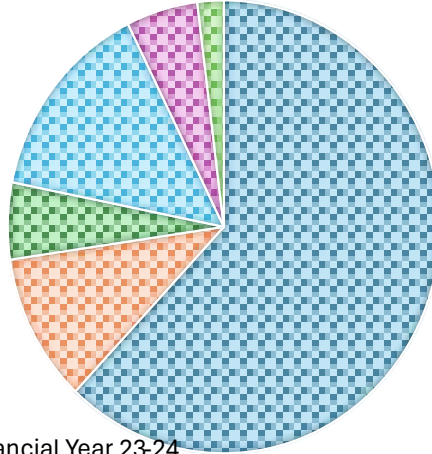


Current Financial Year 23-24

Precept - £251,710.00 (Council Tax Levy)

Services	Grants
Allotments: £1820	LCC Zero Carbon Grant: £5000 (office solar panels)
Cemetery Fees: £1822	NKDC CIL: £2332.94 (Pavilion/community garden)
Hire of sports facilities: £2290	LCC Grass cutting contribution: £2047.78
Other: £918.96	NKDC Litter Picking Grant: £1254.12
	Co-op Community Champions: £973.61 (Community Garden Flower Tubs)
	EV Charger Grant Scheme: £350.00
Total: £6850.96	Total: £11958.45

EXPENDITURE



Current Financial Year 23-24

Current Financial Position to date

Total Income to date	£271, 869.41
Total Spend to date	£238,610.70
Total remaining	£33,258.71
Minus est. spend for March	£16,500
Est Budget underspend	£16,758.71

Expenditure

Salaries	£117,218.13
Estate Management (inc. utilities/repairs)	£77,153.18
Environment	£20,073.01
Recreation	£10,345.31
Administrative (inc. office equipment, stationery, subscriptions, IT costs)	£10,106.95
Other (inc. Christmas trees, poppy wreath)	£3,714.12`
Total Budget Spend to date	£238,610.70

Reserves and Projects

Opening Reserves	£97,002.65
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CIL Money	£18,884.05 (<i>£16,551.11 allocated to pavilion renovations</i>)
+ Est. Underspend	£16,758.71
Total Reserves and Projects	£132,645.41
Minus Office renovations costs	£36,357.57
Remaining Reserves	£96,287.84

Budget for 2024/25

Precept	£276.386
Services	£9,131
Grants	£3,250
Other	£450
Total	£289217

Audit. Financial data is scrutinised each month at Full Council Meetings and any councillor may review the accounts at any time. In addition, third-party internal auditor reviews are conducted annually followed by a comprehensive external audit by ? during which financial accounts, policies and operating procedures are scrutinised. At this date only the internal audit has been completed by Mr Chris Pilkington, the Internal Auditor for the Lincolnshire Associations of Local Councils, who concluded that:

“The Council has competent staff and its overall governance is good”

recommending only minor procedural adjustments.

It is to the credit of both the Parish Clerk, Mrs Kathryn Locke, and Responsible Finance Officer and Deputy Clerk, Ms Kirsty Sinclair, that the necessary records are maintained to a high standard which contributed to the Council obtaining positive reports in these areas.

Other Matters

Freedom of Information and Data Protection. There have been 2 requests under the Freedom of Information regulations made to the RPC which were expedited in accordance with Council Policy. This information was also available on the Council's website.

Remembrance Sunday. On Sunday the 10 November, a multi-faith Service of Remembrance in the 'All Saints' Church was followed a parade to the Memorial Garden where Rev. Al Jenkins presided. Councillor Ditch laid a wreath on behalf of the RPC.

Council Meetings and News. The RPC is established for 13 Councillors but, currently, only has 8. In addition to our monthly 'Full Council' Meetings held at 7pm in the Winchelsea Centre on the second Tuesday of every month (apart for August), separate committee meetings are called on a 'as required' specifically to discuss Finance, Planning, Human Resources, Environmental issues, Recreational provisions, and Estates Management – a tall order for such a small number of volunteers. All members of the public are welcome to attend any of the Council or Committee meetings so I urge you to come along, see what we do and maybe get involved with what can be a very rewarding and satisfying undertaking.

Information on forthcoming Council and Committee meetings can be seen on the Council Notice board outside the Winchelsea Centre and on the Council Facebook page.

Notes from these meetings are available on the Parish Council Website

<https://ruskington.parish.lincolnshire.gov.uk/> Additional news can be found on our Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/RuskingtonPC/>

Summary of projects for 2024-2025

- Replacing the flower tubs beside the Beck
- Renovating the pavilion and opening a community cafe
- Leasing the office spaces at the rear of the property for local businesses to use
- Developing a nature trail for Horseshoe Hollow
- Installing solar panels on the roof of the changing rooms to heat and provide hot water for the pavilion and changing rooms

Summary

This has been another challenging year for the RPC and I make no apologies for focussing, primarily, on Environmental issues and our plans to accommodate and mitigate the impacts of our changing climate. We have made great progress in many areas as I hope this report demonstrates, an even more notable achievement given we have only 62% of established councillor posts occupied.

We have, however, continued to enjoy the superb support our Parish Clerk – Kathryn Locke, our Responsible Financial Officer – Kirsty Sinclair, superbly supported by our very experienced administrative support – Scott Johnson, who between them have navigated us through what could have been some very choppy waters.

Our Environment Caretaker – Andy Doughty – proved an invaluable asset during the recent flooding events working over and above his Job Description to ensure we were kept informed on current situations and able to react swiftly and effectively. Add to this the 'can-do' attitude and practical skills of our Buildings' and Play Area Caretaker, Steve Collet, and the Parish Caretaker, Ben Pallister, who has the less glamorous jobs of litter and dog poo picking, weeding and tidying the village centre, memorial garden and cemetery, it's evident we have a

very professional and effective team who combine to keep our village clean and safe and who enhance the reputation of the RPC.

And finally, I would like to thank the Councillors, many of whom juggle the demands of having a 'proper job' with family commitments and yet are still prepared to give up their time to serve as councillors. These people really are the unsung heroines and heroes of the RPC who work for no reward other than the satisfaction of making our Village a better place to live, work, socialise and play. I believe our village is extremely fortunate to have such a professional, dedicated and conscientious team to whom I offer my sincere thanks.

Owen Ditch
Chairman
Ruskington Parish Council
12 March 2024