



RUSKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26



Annual Report 2025/26 by Cllr Owen Ditch
Chairman Ruskington Parish Council

Introduction.

This year, by popular demand, we have produced a 'slimmed-down' version of the Ruskington Parish Council (RPC) Annual Report which will concentrate on the headline topics such as our challenges, achievements, ongoing projects and future plans.

To further simplify the access to the relevant information within this Report, our main areas of operation have been allocated a dedicated section to which each RPC (sub) Committee 'Chair' (or subject matter expert) has provided specialist input.

For those who prefer more detailed information, this is available on the RPC website, (link below) including comprehensive financial data and 'Minutes' of all Council Meetings.

Similarly, we are hoping that the RPC PowerPoint Presentation from the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) on 26 May 2026 will also be available online along with the transcripts from all other specialist guest speakers which will cover the following topics:

- i. North Kesteven District Councils (NKDC) Conservation Officers' plans to work with RPC to develop a Ruskington Conservation Area.
- ii. The National Flood Forum's post-Storms Babet and Henk recovery programmes and the positive impact they are having on our Village - including planned and completed investigations and remedial works on our waterways.
- iii. How RPC and Community Emergency Reaction Team members are working with the Lincoln Flood Resilience Team to further development our Village Emergency Plan to see us better prepared for future events.
- iv. The latest information from District and County Councillors on their main areas of activity including progress as part of the Lincolnshire Unitary Authority proposed boundary changes and how they might affect us.

I trust you will find this revised format both interesting and informative and visit <https://ruskington.parish.lincolnshire.gov.uk> and follow the links for more information on these and a variety of other Parish Council business.

General areas of Ruskington Parish Council – a Brief Background

RPC Full Council meets formally 11 times per year to consider and 'Resolve' (or not), to support the various proposals/topics put before it. Agenda items are often - but not exclusively - the result of recommendations from the various RPC Committees who research the feasibility of activities form their areas of expertise.

Most committees consider routine business determined by Policies, Legislation and Lawful Directives, but they also explore the 'extracurricular' activities such as hosting Village events etc.

Committee Composition. Currently, RPC has 4 Committees, recently realigned from the previous 6 to better reflect our daily business and reduce duplication; these are:

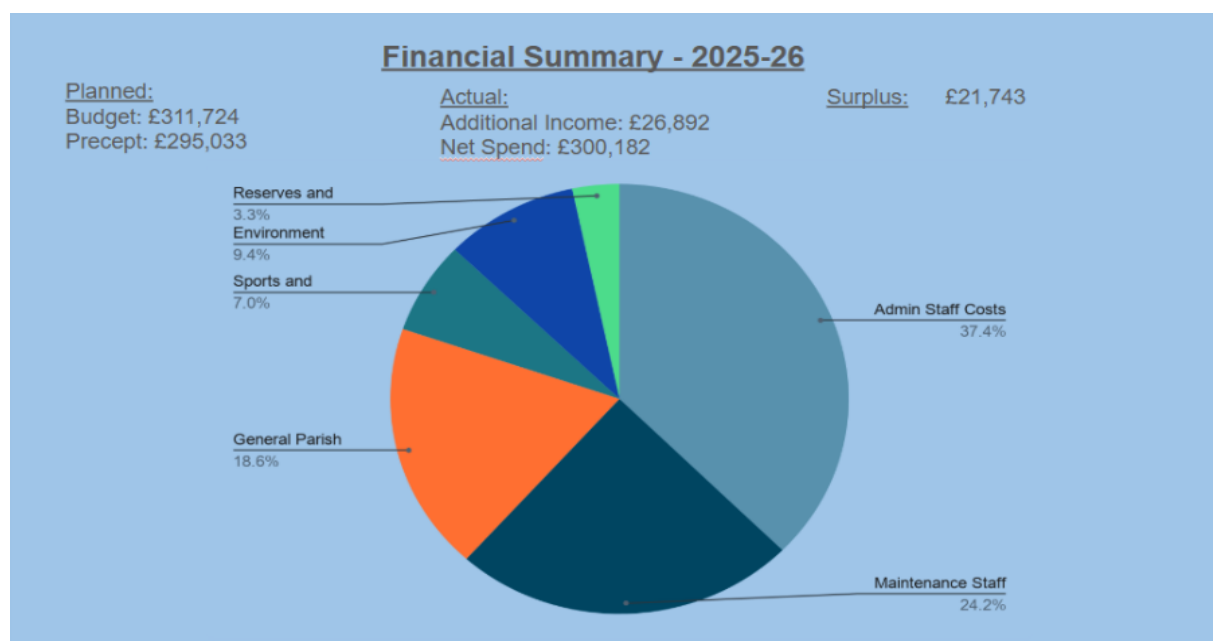
1. Finance Committee (Chaired by the RPC Chairman)
2. Human Resources (the only mandated committee)
3. Environment¹ and Estates Management/Planning Committee
4. Events and Recreation Committee

The next part of the Report provides a brief description on RPC Cttee functions.

Finance Committee

RPC generates the majority of its income through the Precept, a small percentage of Council Tax collected by NKDC, plus other amounts from services such as Allotment Rentals, Burial Services, Sports and Recreational income and the rental from the 4 Commercial Offices² to the rear of RPC's premises.

Financial Analysis³



¹ Environmental issues are also a Standing Agenda Item on all RPC Cttees

² Most activities generate income only to cover operating costs but office rental is expected to make a profit in the next FY now full occupancy has been achieved

³ a more detailed Financial Report can be seen at Enclosure 1 – Page 8

Additional Income is occasionally received as follows:

Community Infrastructure Levy (CiL) - a charge levied by local authorities on new housing developments in their area to support small community projects. (Page 7)

Section 106 Receipts. Similar to CiL, a section 106 Agreement is a legal arrangement between developers and local planning authorities (NKDC) that requires developers to contribute towards a range of infrastructure and services, such as community facilities, public open space, transport improvements etc. This year, Ruskington was awarded almost £200,000⁴ for sports, leisure and recreational facilities to be spent within 10 years of allocation. A recent Public Consultation has taken place to consider the possible use of this sum. (Details: Recreation on Page 5)

RPC Income and expenditure are closely scrutinised monthly, at Full Council Meetings, by no-notice 'snap-checks' by any Parish Councillor, by annual Internal Audits and Annual External Audits. Finally, all financial data must be submitted for review in accordance with Annual Governance and Accountability Return directives and it is pleasing to record that RPC continues to receive excellent reports for the standards of Financial Controls and general Policy and Administrative procedures.

Human Resources

Human Resources is probably not the best title for this Cttee given that its responsibilities extend far beyond 'People Services'. Some of the tasks over the previous year have included:

- i. Policies and governance: reviewed and updated Council policies.
- ii. Workforce capacity: planned recruitment of an additional part-time caretaker to strengthen operational resilience
- iii. Role clarity: in consultation with staff, reviewed job descriptions and made amendments to reflect operational needs of the Council.
- iv. Pensions: completed extensive staff review and secured agreed transition to the Local Government Pension Scheme for those who expressed a desire to change.
- v. Communications and community engagement: Launched monthly parish e-newsletter to help residents stay better informed.
- vi. Community presence: supported presentations to village groups, attended District Council meetings.

Future HR Tasks.

- i. Continuation of rolling programme of policy review.
- ii. Support the completion of the caretaker recruitment process and induction
- iii. Work with staff to keep roles, training, and workplace arrangements under review.
- iv. Monitor the implementation of the new pension arrangements

⁴ S106 projects must meet strict criteria to be included for funding.

Environment and Estates Management and Planning

Environment. The Environment element of this newly established Cttee continues to develop the Horseshoe Hollow Management Plan which was written by a previous Parish Councillor (and current non-council advisor on this committee), Dr Sheena Cotter and RPC's Environmental Caretaker – Mr Andy Doughty. It is a comprehensive document covering, amongst other things, Geology and Soil, Hydrology and Flood Alleviation and will form the foundation of our application for Horseshoe Hollow to become a Local Nature Reserve. Andrew has also produced a detailed 'Ash Dieback' Action Plan intended to identify diseased trees, isolate and control the 'spread'.

Estates Management Planning. Continue to review planning applications but with added focus on Biodiversity Net Gains and Flood Zone data. If successful, RPC's application to gain Heritage Status⁵ may add 'architectural impact' to our planning review.

Other achievements in the last Civic year include:

- Secured planning permission for the future development of Parkfield Pavilion to include catering support and overflow car park.
- Successfully let Parish Office space which both generates income and provides support to local businesses.
- Installed new benches and waste bins in locations around the village.
- Refurbished the Garden of Remembrance, including improved access.
- Obtained £16,116 of funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to restore the cemetery lychgate, preserving an important village landmark.

NKDC Litter Picking Grant. But it's not all glamour, and Ruskington Parish Council works closely with NKDC to remove and prevent littering and dog fouling incidents in the village, and gratefully acknowledges the 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.

Events and Recreation

Events. A newly formed committee designed to focus on the extracurricular events which, although not necessarily a 'bread-and-butter' function of RPC, have a positive impact on Village life. The inaugural event on 4 May '26 – The Duck Hunt – proved a tremendous success and will be followed by a 'Celebration of Youth' event in July '26 and a Christmas Market early in December '26.

Other responsibilities that will fall to the Events Team include:

- Forging relationships with other Village Events organisers to create bigger and better spectacles.
- Organising the logistics of other Village ceremonial events such as the Remembrance Day Service.

⁵ Plans already submitted for Ruskington to receive Protected Heritage Status - (APM Presentation)

- Developing and implementing a Flag and Ensign Policy.

Recreation. Although closely aligned to the function of the Events' Team, their responsibilities often require specialist and focussed attention. For example, they have:

- Negotiated Contractual Terms with a Local Junior Football Team for the use of sports ground facilities in return for a Ground's Maintenance arrangement.
- Established the permitted use of section 106 receipts (see information under 'Finance')
- Overseen the Public Consultation to canvas opinion for the potential use of s106 receipts.
- Scrutinised public consultation results and published their findings.

Early survey results from the s106 consultation suggest:

- The redevelopment of Parkfield Pavilion.
- Refurbishing sports enclosure to include all-weather surface.
- A Trim Trail around Parkfield Playing Fields.
- A Basketball court.
- Skate Park.

Other projects for consideration are a review of Hillside play area once land ownership and lease expiry dates are established.

Litter and the NKDC Litter Picking Grant.

The problems with littering and dog fouling continues. Council recognises that it is a minority of people who discard litter or let their dogs foul the village. However, over the last year, Council Caretakers are reporting and removing increasing amounts of litter, especially cigarette butts and disposable vapes, and dog faeces from the pavements and paths, highways, open spaces, play areas and sports fields. This diverts them from their other duties and increases the cost to the taxpaying residents.

In 2024, Council organised an Anti-Dog Poo Poster competition for the younger members of the community. The Admin Staff approached the village schools, and thirty-four creative and colourful anti dog poo posters were submitted. The entries were of such a high standard that Council agreed to use all the posters, and these can be found, displayed, throughout the village in areas known to have dog fouling issues.

In the meantime, Council remains grateful to the enthusiastic group of volunteers, including staff members, who routinely help to collect litter throughout the village.

Acknowledgement. Ruskington Parish Council works closely with NKDC to remove and prevent littering, flyposting, 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.

Community Litter Picks.

On 15 March 2025, Cllr Chris Bain led the first, very successful, Community Litter Pick on behalf of the Parish Council. 25 residents took part, and six bags of litter were collected. Afterwards the litter-pickers returned to the parish office for light refreshments and a chat with the councillors and staff who took part.

It is planned for the Community Litter Picks to become a regular feature on the RPC calendar – please look out for information on Council's social media pages, website and noticeboard.

Chairman's Closing Comments

So that's it in a nutshell, although, as I wrote in my introduction, much more detail is available on our website. But to sum up, this has been yet another challenging and rewarding Civic Year for the RPC Team with a realignment of our committees and the addition of a dedicated Events Team helping to deliver a more focussed and professional service for you, our parishioners.

Improved communications between RPC staff, Councillors and parishioners continues to be a high priority and our talented Administrative Support expert – Scott Johnston – has made great progress in this regard.

The significant s106 windfall will doubtless deliver improved leisure and recreational services, and the work to secure Conservation status for parts of the Village is both ambitious and admirable.

Environmental issues continue to occupy our efforts in all areas of RPC activities perhaps most clearly evident by the continuing work to gain Nature Reserve status for Horseshoe Hollow. But there is much more to our Environmental endeavours so I urge you to research our achievements and aspirations for the future.

To address the elephant in the room, it's an inevitable fact of life that flooding episodes can reoccur with little notice; however, I remain optimistic that the various specialist authorities are making real progress in finding novel and innovative ways of preventing and containing the worst effects, and that the continued development of our Emergency Plan will see us well prepared to deal with future events.

I've often said in previous Reports that People are our greatest asset, and that remains the case. RPC is particularly fortunate to have a thoroughly professional and dedicated team so I close this report by paying tribute to: Kathryn Locke, our very knowledgeable and diligent Parish Clerk; Kirsty Sinclair, our skilled Responsible Financial Officer; our talented Caretakers - Andy Doughty and Steve Collette who help keep our Village safe, clean and functional; and Admin Support guru - Scott Johnston who I've already name-checked above (I even spelled his name correctly this year).

But I'd also like to record my special thanks to the Councillors who give up their valuable time, free-of-charge, to support all the activities and initiatives covered in

the Report. So, take a bow: Cllrs Mike Trolley, Dave Conway, Chris Bain, Anne Jennings, Bernard Harrison, Sue Hislop, Lydia Shelton and Peter Cunningham.

Here's to another productive and rewarding year.

Cllr Owen Ditch
Chairman
Ruskington Parish Council
May 2026

Enclosure: 1 (Page 8) RPC Financial Report

Enclosure 1
RPC Annual Report
dated 26 May 2026

Last Years Expenditure

Reserves and projects: £9,990 (includes solar panels at pavilion, horseshoe hollow bridge, part of the office refurbishment, toilet and office roof repairs, guttering for office and pavilion)

Sports and Recreation (including Pavilion & Changing Rooms and play areas):
£20,873

General parish costs (including admin, audit, van costs, training and finance costs):
£55,947

Environment (including horseshoe hollow, allotments, cemetery and toilets): £28,345

Admin staff costs: £112,311

Maintenance Staff Costs: £72,716

Total expenditure: £300,182

Total income: £321,925

Grants and Donations

Received in 2025/26

CIL - £4262

LCC Grass Cutting Contribution - £4458

NDKC Litter Picking Grant - £1750

Local residents and businesses – Beck Planters - £200

Local businesses – Christmas trees on High Street - £70

Lottery Heritage Funding – Lychgate Renovation - £16,116 (awarded in 2024-25 but received in 25-26)

Total - £26,856

Other donations received include various plant bulbs, various free trees and hedging.

Awarded to community groups in 2025-26

Ruskington Scouts - £500

Finley's Fundraisers - £171

Grant applications from local clubs are welcomed before the April and October meetings. Information can be found on Council's website or by contacting the Clerk.