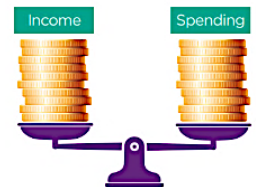

Parish Council meetings

The Parish Council has held two meetings since the last newsletter in October 2023 and is delighted that meetings continue to be well attended. Since then, the PC welcomed Ms Pam Sutherland as a new member, marked Remembrance Day with a display of poppies in and around the village, progressed discussions about the footpath between Hemswell and Harpswell and spent much time working on its 2024/2025 budget! If you'd like to get involved and help us achieve more for the village and parish, there are still vacancies to fill, so please get in touch with the clerk, message via Facebook or visit <https://hemswell.parish.lincolnshire.gov.uk>

Balancing the budget

Parish Council Budget and Precept for 2024/25

It's worrying to hear about big city councils on the verge of running out of money and the impact on those relying on their services. Every council, regardless of size, has a legal duty to prepare a budget, and it's one of the most important annual tasks a council undertakes to allow it to submit a 'precept' demand. The 'precept' is a balancing fee that local councils charge residents, and when the precept increases, it means a council is asking residents to pay a bit more money to support the services it provides.



Like everyone at this time, the PC is facing financial challenges from rising costs, but it doesn't receive direct funding from central government and has limited opportunities to generate income to meet these rising costs. The precept fee, which is charged to residents, helps the PC fund services, including grass cutting, maintaining its assets, including the Speed Indicator Device, Civil Cemetery, Maypole and Beck, etc., and to fund projects and support requests for grants for the benefit of the community (e.g., play area grass cutting). The PC has always been financially prudent and, over the last four years, has kept the costs to residents below the actual costs to the council by drawing money from its reserves to keep the precept low. However, the PC follows national guidance regarding its level of reserves and cannot take this approach indefinitely.

The PC will increase the precept for the next financial year to balance its budget and will contribute just over £1242 from its reserves and apply for £9450 from WLDC, an increase of £1950 from last year's precept. In practice, this means a rise of £15.20 a year, equivalent to 29 pence per week (for a Band D property), but those with certain exemptions or a property in a different band (not Band D) will pay a different amount of tax.

To ensure the PC keeps a close eye on managing its budget and keep its costs low, it will continue to seek the best value for money when outsourcing services or maintenance work, will reclaim VAT where appropriate, seek grant funding to undertake projects and allocate any unspent budgets to build reserves for specific projects it would like to undertake in the future.

Please get involved

Hemswell and Harpswell Village Hall Needs Your Support



At its meeting in January, the PC learned about the urgent need to recruit new members to the village hall committee and for greater community engagement to ensure the long-term future of the village hall. Although village hall events are typically well attended, they are supported by more people from outside the parish than by local residents and with several long-standing committee members having expressed their wish to step down at the AGM, there are worries about the viability of managing the village hall and play area. The village hall committee will be seeking advice from national and local associations and the PC and have written a questionnaire asking you about what the VH means to you. You can find the minutes of the VH meeting on the PC website and the questionnaire will be dropping through your letterbox soon. Please take the time to complete it because the village hall needs your support and involvement.

**Thanks to those
observing the
speed limit**

Latest Speed Indicator Device (SID) data and thoughts on 'wheelie bin' stickers

SID has been monitoring traffic along Dawnhill Lane since last October and now resides on Maypole Street. Between 28 Oct 2023 and 10 Jan 2024, SID recorded 4851 traffic counts with zero speed violations. The average speed along Dawnhill Lane was 13.8 mph, and the maximum speed recorded was 24 mph. Although this shows good compliance with the speed limit, the narrow road with parked cars and driveways along it would be even safer if people drove at 20 mph – hence the 'twenty's plenty' campaign you might know about. The PC has been made aware of an issue along Maypole Street, so the data from SID may prove helpful regarding the timing and speed of traffic along the road if a complaint is taken forward to the PSCO.

**Wheelie bin
stickers – tell us
what you think!**

Regarding speed, the PC discussed the merits and cost of 'wheelie bin' stickers for residents. There is some evidence to show they can be effective on long stretches of urban streets, but there are issues to consider, including which bin to put a sticker on, how many residents would want to take part, whether it would make people leave their bins out, and the cost. After weighing up the factors, the PC agreed it could not justify the expenditure at this time for two reasons: i) budgetary constraints, and ii) SID data indicates good compliance with the limit despite the 'perception' of speeding through the village. The PC will monitor the situation and revisit this idea if persistent speed violations are detected, and if residents feel that 'wheelie bin' stickers might help raise speed awareness. **Tell us what you think about wheelie bin stickers – are they a good idea, would you use one on your bin? Please drop us an email at hemswellparishcouncil@gmail.com**



Updates

Hemswell to Harpswell footpath (FP19) The PC has had positive discussions with landowners and other agencies regarding the stiles/gates along the footpath. R. James has provided the PC with much useful information plus an interesting map from 1905 showing the original route of the footpaths from the village to the windmill at Hemswell and to Harpswell! However, the current route is the legal footpath route and recorded on the 'definitive' map, and since the land is used for grazing, it's important that walkers follow the waymarked signs and ensure gates are secure to prevent animals straying. The PC will update residents when it can.



Maypole Street will be closed on **15th and 16th February** to lay new underground cabling for a customer connection. Look out for signs with precise dates and time nearer the date.

Green Bin subscriptions – renew by 4th March. The annual cost is now £44.00 for each bin (the first increase for two years due to an increase in fuel, vehicles and staff costs). WLDC provides 18 garden waste collections each year, running from March through to the end of November. To start or renew a subscription call 01427 676676 or visit <https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/bins-waste-recycling/garden-waste-collection-service>

Save the Date!

**Parish Meeting
20th May 2024**

Next Parish Council Meeting: Monday 18th March 2024. Village Hall 7.00 pm.

The Parish Council has a duty to host an *Annual Meeting of the Parish*. It is a meeting open to all electors of the Parish, who have the right to attend and speak on any matter of local interest and is different from the annual parish council meeting. There may be reports from the Parish, District or County Councillors and community groups, but more importantly, it's the opportunity for residents to share their views on what matters to them and their ambitions for the parish and its residents. So please come along on **Monday 20th May 2024** and get involved.



Further details on social media, village noticeboard and the PC website.