

Reports for the Parish Assembly – Clerk and Councillors
Tuesday 15th April 2025

Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer– Vicki Rutt

A finance meeting was held on Tuesday 15th October 2024, where Cllrs and I went through each budget line to ensure that the Council can run ‘business as usual’ but also be able to start building contingency pots for future projects that will come up.

The Precept for 2025/26 was set at £45,400. This was a 6.5% increase. On a band D property, this is an increase of 6p per week.

The Parish Council tries to keep the precept as low as they possibly can, however, due to the fact that there has not been an increase for a while and the cost of inflation rising which has resulted in most expenditure lines increasing, the precept had to see an increase.

Below is a breakdown of the precept comparison. If you ever have any questions on the Parish Council’s finances, please do not hesitate to contact me.

HADLOW DOWN PARISH COUNCIL - PRECEPT COMPARISON			
EXPENSE CATEGORY	2024-25	2025-26	% DIFFERENCE
Clerk's salary	£23,500.00	£23,500.00	-
Parish Project Hours	£1,000.00	£1,800.00	80.00
Clerk's training	£300.00	£300.00	-
Administration	£1,346.00	£1,800.00	33.73
PC insurance	£550.00	£550.00	-
Subscriptions	£652.00	£464.00	- 28.83
Grants	£3,710.00	£3,490.00	- 5.93
Hire of hall	£556.00	£672.00	20.86
Audit	£700.00	£700.00	-
Bank charges	£72.00	£72.00	-
Maintenance of Burial Ground	£1,520.00	£1,520.00	-
Tree Survey/Work	£500.00	£500.00	-
Litter & dog bin emptying	£1,650.00	£1,684.00	2.06
Fingerpost maintenance	£744.00	£0.00	- 100.00
Chairmen's expenses	£100.00	£150.00	50.00
Councillor's training	£300.00	£150.00	- 50.00
Chair and Councillor's allowance	£0.00	£0.00	
Election expenses	£0.00	£500.00	
Website/IT	£1,000.00	£100.00	- 90.00
Highways	£1,035.00	£1,035.00	-
Legal fees	£0.00	£2,000.00	
Maintenance of play area & inspection	£1,405.00	£1,405.00	-
Entrance to playing field Loan paymt	£1,135.00	£1,135.00	-
Defibrillators	£60.00	£60.00	-
Contingencies incl. Highways/Footpaths/Noticeboards	£500.00	£500.00	-
Play equipment [into reserves	£100.00	£100.00	-
Transfer into reserves	£225.00	£225.00	-
Earmarked reserves	£225.00	£1,000.00	344.44
Total	£42,885.00	£45,412.00	5.89
Transfer from reserves	£0.00	£0.00	
TOTAL PRECEPT	£42,660.00	£45,400.00	6.42

***use funds out of reserves if needed

Cllr Peter Weston

My specific responsibilities have changed somewhat since this time last year and now include:

- Speeding, including management of the Council's two speed signs (SIDs) – and once again, very many thanks to Steve Godfrey for his help!
- Liaison with the relatively recently established A267 Road Safety Group (which has an active presence on Facebook).
- Finance.
- Membership of two advisory / liaison groups related to the existing Village Hall and the development of a new Community Centre.
- A number of risk assessments of Parish Council assets.

This report focuses mainly on Vehicle Speed:

A summary of data from the two SIDs is published in the Parish Magazine every month and consistently shows a high proportion of drivers ignore the speed limits putting pedestrians, other road users and animals at risk. The data has been used to strengthen the case made to East Sussex Highways for greater speed calming measures, Police checks and speed calming measures to be put in place. This campaign has relatively recently had some success with the announcement by East Sussex CC last December that that the A272 in Hadlow Down and A267 Five Ashes to Cross in Hand are to have lower speed limits. Their proposal is that the existing 50mph speed limit on the A272 Main Road to the east of Hadlow Down is reduced to 40mph, and the existing national speed limit on A272 Curtains Hill to the west of Hadlow Down reduced to 50mph. It is also proposed that the existing 40mph speed limit on the A267 at Five Ashes be extended to a point south of the A272 Summer Hill junction, and a 50mph speed limit be introduced between that point and the existing 40mph speed limit at Cross in Hand. East Sussex CC also says that it will be introducing measures to help improve compliance with the existing 30mph speed limit in Hadlow Down. Whilst this announcement was very welcome, it will not solve all Hadlow Down's speeding problems! The campaign continues!

The associated safety / accident problems of the A272 and A267 junction continue to be of concern and are raised time and time again with East Sussex Highways. Whilst the initial focus of the A267 Road Safety Group appears to be speed limit reduction, they share the Parish Council's concerns over the safety record of this junction, thus the importance of close liaison to ensure our campaigns are complementary.

The following tables are a summary of the data collected by the Parish Council's two SIDs that I hope will be of interest:

Summary: A272 Wilderness Wood Site			
Number of vehicles detected: 824,604			
Eastbound		Westbound	
30 mph+	54.0%	30 mph+	55.3%
35 mph+	22.2%	35 mph+	24.5%

Summary: A272 St Mark's Church Site			
Number of vehicles detected: 583,661			
Eastbound		Westbound	
30 mph+	66.1%	30 mph+	56.4%
35 mph+	36.3%	35 mph+	17.3%

Summary: School Lane Site			
Number of vehicles detected: 104,043			
Northbound		Southbound	
30 mph+	13.7%	30 mph+	21.8%
35 mph+	02.1%	35 mph+	6.02%

Cllr Damon Wellman

ESCC Highways

With many years of experience dealing with ESCC Highways, in my opinion it remains the most incompetent and inefficient department. The new maintenance contract announced last year was another stunt by ESCC which was really no surprise. The reality being it's the same contractors and management individuals wasting council tax with the road network literally falling to pieces time and time again. Highways is not a funding issue, it is a mismanagement issue.

Gatwick Airport

Whatever your opinion on the proposed Gatwick expansion, it is likely to happen one way or another. February this year saw the current government back a second runway at Gatwick and the additional expansion that goes with it, more flights, more passengers and more congestion.

This is all promoted on an alleged increase in economic benefits, despite the fact that the economic numbers being touted have been proved time and time again to not stack up, unlike the planes over our houses! The reality is that it will mean more air pollution, more congestion and more noise for an already overburdened South East of England.

With an additional runway at Gatwick, Heathrow and possibly now Luton, the amount of additional flights that creates, it is astounding that we are still being told that it's our cars

that are the environmental problem! (A standard Boeing 747 burns the equivalent of more than 10 metric tons of Diesel per hour, let that sink in for a moment!)

Cllr Alan Hobbs

I have the responsibility of trees and the graveyard inspection.

Burial Ground

During my time I have completed regular inspections of the burial ground, concerns were raised on the surrounding hedges and footpaths due to overgrown brambles and foliage. I would like to thank our Parish Clerk, Vicki, for liaising with the contractor to ensure this is rectified so proper access was restored. I carry out regular wobble tests of headstones and report back to the Clerk. Last year, the Chairman and Clerk, along with her family, cleared the burial ground extension area which was much needed and the Clerk has ensured that the contractor will clear this regularly, so it does not become overgrown again.

Trees

Unfortunately, this report is in progress due to my current personal circumstances that has reduced the time I have available to survey all the roads and lanes in the parish. I am aware that this needs to be a priority (especially where overhead cables could be damaged) and I plan to have the report completed as soon as possible. To further assist me I would very much welcome any input from our parishioners to help me identify any dangerous or fallen trees that they are aware of. so, the parish council can raise the issues with the relative authority, utility companies or landowners.

Cllr Stephen Lester

Last year's heavy rains did not go unnoticed with some damage being caused to some of the footpaths in the parish. However, efforts by some parishioners to maintain / keep tidy them has been noted and appreciated.

The bridle way in waste wood had suffered particularly badly but repairs to this were carried out by ESCC.

Hopefully this summer will be drier than last and we won't see the same level of damage as last. However, with funds tight its everyone's responsibility to look after the countryside and not to cause damage where possible. Just because you have the right to do something doesn't mean you should if doing so is going to have a detrimental effect.

Cllr David Munday and Cllr Ben Floyd

Apart from the general duties common to all Councillors, my two special areas of responsibility are for planning (shared with Cllr. Floyd) and for the maintenance of village emergency arrangements.

We are notified of most local planning applications, except some agricultural ones, and they are discussed in our public sessions so that HDPC's opinion can be sent to Wealden.

Councillors are required by law to keep an open mind until voting after discussion, and not to form an opinion ("predetermine") beforehand.

District Councils (Wealden) are required to have local plans for future housing, and these contain specific local planning policies to be followed in conjunction with the national policies of central government.

The 2019 plan was rejected by the planning inspectorate- failure to assist housing policies of nearby councils, and too much emphasis on environmental protection. A new draft local plan was circulated by Wealden for consultation, but it is no longer clear that this will go forward under new arrangements now proposed by central government.

At present, we work with the National Planning Policy as recently modified, which is often in favour of development

Cllrs Floyd and Munday brief HDPC on planning applications and policy and attend local consultation meetings.

A new emergency plan was discussed and approved in May 2021, and this is considered and updated annually in May. It is available on the HDPC website, and is a simple plan for a small village, relying on local volunteers for unpredictable events, before professional emergency services are available.