

Firstly, the thank you's!

A whole-hearted thank you to our staff; Roz, our Parish Clerk and Financial Officer, Steve and Simon, our Groundsmen, and Wesley, our Village Hall Caretaker, as well as the regular contractors we employ who keep our village hall running, maintain our precious green spaces and undertake all the behind-the-scenes activities which means we all benefit.

Thanks also go to the local groups, services, and businesses, large and small, who make our village a community. In our village of over 4,600 residents, we have access to Churches steeped in history, a volunteer-led community library, a brilliant school, high-quality, locally sourced food and drink establishments, and community groups to cater to all ages including the CCG, Youth Club, Scouts and Girl Guiding, Yarn Bombers, Yoga, Dance classes, Tennis and Dementia Café (to name a few).

Thank you to my fellow councillors, who give up their time and volunteer to help run this village and ensure fair and democratic representation during all discussions. We still have the same 11 councillors we started with a year ago, which hopefully is a positive sign of the year to come!

My final thank you is to all of you, our residents, who's engagements, successes and achievements are a true testament to how you can help shape a community, make it stronger and grow for the better. Tonight, we recognise the amazing contributions by individuals through our Annual Parish Community Awards. If you feel there is someone deserving of a community award, please nominate at any time in the year by contacting Roz.

We at the Parish Council are always working to protect our village, our homes, our greenspace, and our communities to keep them wonderful. The Fosse Villages Neighbourhood Plan has recently been adopted in a revised form, which sees more of our greenspace recognised and protected. We have also recently extended our Queen Elizabeth II Community Orchard to 47 fruit trees, purchased by residents.

Our Councillors continue to discuss all planning applications and make representations both in favour, where we feel something is good for our village, and against, when we do not. We are in close discussions with the consortium who are developing the Land West of Stoney Stanton proposal, participating in the dedicated community liaison group, and expect a more formal consultation to be brought later in the year or early 2025, following approval of the new Blaby Local Plan, which is still in progress. The Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange (HNRFI) is now with the planning inspectorate to summarise their findings in the examination period and provide a recommendation to the Secretary of State (by June 12th). The Parish Council, through a specialist consultant, provided many representations to the planning inspectorate through the examination and hope these will contribute to a positive outcome for our village and communities.

Ever mindful when considering planning are the awful flooding issues faced by our village. In December and January, we saw surface flooding on and around Station Road, as well as overflowing drains and domestic sewerage discharge in other parts of the village. The Parish Council are pushing for more accountability and action from the water company and more consideration around these issues for Planning Applications. In addition, we continue to raise the traffic and speeding issues with the Highways Authority. The road closure on Broughton Road to fix the leaking water main truly emphasised the volume of traffic that use our village like rat-run, during which time traffic was quieter than I've ever known it. The roundabout in the centre of the village continues to be a pinch point, as cars, vans and lorries try to navigate the

tight corners. We put out a plea to all drivers using the roundabout to ensure you leave enough room for the lorries, be patient, and please be mindful of pedestrians using the crossing.

In April, the council agreed to increase the precept by £9,511 to £139,511 for the 2024-25 financial year. This equates to a Council Tax Band D payable amount of £94.45, an increase of 7.5%. Increasing the council tax is always a difficult decision, and more so in the current economic climate. This increase represents the increase in costs the council is also facing. Our focus and commitments to this village remain, and this year our budget includes, but is not limited to:

- Ground maintenance to maintain our green spaces and Queen Elizabeth II Community Orchard
- Management and maintenance of the Village Hall
- Grant provision to our community library
- Delivery of our village Youth Club
- Christmas lights maintenance and replacement (where required)
- Professional fees in respect of large-scale planning developments

A reminder that any person interested has the right to inspect the accounting records for the previous financial year. These documents will be available on reasonable notice by application to our Clerk, Roz, between 10th June and 19th July 2024.

There is still a lot going on in the world, and my thoughts remain with the civilians in Gaza, Israel, Ukraine and Sudan, with the millions facing hunger in South and East Africa, and with the 4.3m children growing up in poverty right here in the UK. We may not be able to solve these big problems, but acknowledging them, helps us appreciate what we do have.

The next 12 months will see big decisions and, possibly, some big changes locally and nationally that may divide us, with a final decision on HNRFI by 12 September, the Land West of Stoney Stanton application, a General Election before the end of the year, and County Election in May 2025. Whatever side of the divide you sit on, please remember to treat other with civility, respect, and kindness. We are, after all, all part of this community, and diversity is what makes a community great!