Trysull and Seisdon Parish Council

Happy New Year!

We hope everyone had a most enjoyable Christmas holiday and that the New Year will bring health and happiness.

Dwelling a little on the recent past, a big thank you to all those who joined us on Seisdon Green in early December to celebrate the Christmas Tree Lights switch-on. It was a super turnout, and the mince pies and sherry went down a treat!

But now, to look forward to the challenges and opportunities the New Year will bring; Already a busy start, with our first meeting finalising the essential business of budget setting for the next fiscal year. These matters require serious attention and thought and by law must be put before and agreed in full Council. You should expect no less, given these spending decisions will effectively determine the 2024/2025 Precept, which is then collected as part of your Council Tax.

The inflationary pressures of last year, peaking in double figures, will have escaped no one's attention. Whilst some price rise stability has now been restored, cost increases, nevertheless, remain cumulative in effect. With our main 'Grounds Maintenance' contract due for its triennial renewal alongside other re-occurring purchased services, we will inevitably experience additional cost increases. Our easiest option would be to simply pass all of them on to you - the taxpayer. However, we have chosen not to do so!

We hope you will agree that there have been significant visual improvements to our Parish in recent years and a drive to increase our wonderful volunteer base that remains essential to the upkeep of our villages and community projects.

It is by design, and not accident, that we concentrate our attentions on projects, that after initial funding then become self-sustaining or self-financing for the greatest part or have minimal on-going associated maintenance costs e.g., Speed Watch, SID Signs, Village Tidy-Ups, Planters, Parish Calendar's, Defibrillator, Telephone Boxes….. etc.

Of course, we cannot avoid spending to improve, but we must stay focused on strict budgetary control if we are to continue to deliver at a household cost well below the average for South Staffordshire.

As well as the continuation of existing projects we have many further improvements in mind. We have received expressive offers of private funding for a Seisdon Defibrillator, Trysull Christmas Lights, and additional benches which we will continue to explore.

Our biggest commitment this year will be to the Community Garden that will transform 'Poor's Piece' land lying adjacent to the Village Hall. This has been in planning for a considerable time, and we are almost set to put the first shovel in the ground. We have not mentioned this to dwell on the detail, given this narrative could not do this project justice, but to inform all that the financial planning for it has also been developed in parallel with financial reserves being accumulated over previous sessions. We believe the 'Garden' will provide extraordinary value for money, particularly given the additional amenity it will provide to the Parish now and for future generations.

All said, we shall now return to the important part – How will the current fiscal round affect your pocket? No one welcomes a price rise from whatever source, but comfort may be taken from the principle that our Parish Precept will always be dedicated solely to improvements in our Parish.

The headline statistics will show that we have requested a 9.7% increase on last year's cost to you. This is true; however, we have also experienced a decrease in the parish tax base of 2.4% (i.e., a decrease in the number of households that will now contribute). This means that the rise in actual Precept, from last year, is in fact diluted to 7.3%.

However, we believe that translating these statistics into absolute terms is more enlightening. Our requested increase for a Band D property will be £5.75 per year, per household. This is less than 50 pence per month. Even acknowledging that our Parish is more typically biased towards higher value Band F properties, this increase remains below 70 pence per month.

We trust that you will appreciate the transparency and take assurance that Parish Council finances and affairs are in very good order.

Kind Regards to you all.

Chairman - Andrew