

Ledston Parish Council
22 Green Lane
Ledston WF10 2BD

1 November 2022

LEDSTON PARISH COUNCIL – Community Governance Review

Dear Susanna

Ledston Parish Council would like to request a community governance review. The council is small, has no income generating assets apart from a limited number of allotments and has, over a number of years suffered from poor governance and a relatively high turnover of councillors. The council does not currently have a clerk and its chair is undertaking that role until such time as the future of the council is known. The financial position of the council is considered to be unsustainable going forward.

Before considering a community governance review, the council held discussions with neighbouring parish councils; Kippax and Ledsham to seek a merger. Unfortunately, these discussions were not successful. The only option Ledston Parish Council can see now is for the villages of Ledston and Ledston Luck to become unparished.

To provide some further information on the background to the council and its current financial position, issues and liabilities please see below.

We look forward to working towards the next stage in the process. If you need any further information please do not hesitate to contact me on clerk@ledstonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Kind regards

Wendy Jones

Chairman, Ledston Parish Council

BRIEFING PAPER

1. Background to the council and current position

Ledston Parish Council represents the residents of Ledston and Ledston Luck. Ledston PC had, for many years, not discharged its lawful duties as a Parish Council and ceased operating (unofficially) at some point during 2019/20. The council was re-established in February 2021 with five new councillors. Two of the original five remain at the council (chair and vice chair). At the current time Ledston has four councillors – all residents of Ledston. A councillor was co-opted from Ledston Luck earlier this year, however he has since resigned due to family and work commitments. The council's clerk has also resigned his post and given the current position there are no plans to recruit this financial year. The chair is providing clerical support in the interim. The council is running lawfully and according to good governance. The current councillors do not intend to stand for re-election in 2023 and

given the difficulties experienced in securing councillors previously it seems optimistic to assume that five new councillors would come forward at that time.

2. Financial position

Income for the parish comes from Leeds City Council via precept - £4750 in 2022/23. Internal and external audits are up to date. A copy of the 2022/23 annual budget is provided at the end of this report. The council has approx. £4000 in reserves.

Staffing costs equate to over 50% of the council's income. Other operational expenditure accounts for the balance.

Income this year is estimated at just over £6000. Annual allotment income is £300 per year, however this year the council invoiced for the previous three years rents which had not been collected and budget income against this line was estimated at £1,150.

To run the council according to good governance, with the assistance of a qualified clerk @ 4hrs per week leaves the council with little or no funding to provide additional services to parishioners and no funding for unbudgeted expenditure.

3. The Charity land

Two pieces of land within Ledston Luck form a Registered Charity - The Ledston Luck Recreation Ground Charity (LLRGC). The land is registered with the Charity Commission (ref. 523766) and was gifted to the council by CISWO (the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation). We are in the process of trying to access records to understand more about the council's obligations.

A fenced off children's playground sits within the larger of the two pieces of land. Regular informal checks on the playground are undertaken by a local resident on behalf of the council. A ROSPA safety review is carried out annually and repairs undertaken as required. The second area of land is a smaller, grassed area with a litter bin and picnic benches. Both areas of grass are maintained by a contractor employed by the parish council.

4. Issues/Liabilities

Allotments are running well and tenant rents are up to date. One allotment agreement was terminated due to its condition – clearance of the plot is estimated to be in the region of £3,000. The previous tenant is an elderly man who owns two properties in the village both of which reflect the condition of the allotment, however, he does not live at either property and both the houses and the allotment are causes for concern for the neighbours. We have taped off the allotment as no funding is available to clear the plot.

The playground within charity land is now quite old and in need of replacement – to replace like for like has been estimated at £25,000. A recent Rospa report has identified several pieces of equipment that need remedial works to be carried out. This is unbudgeted work which will need to come from reserves.

Trees on the charity land are the responsibility of the parish council. Following storm damage earlier in the year remedial safety work had to be undertaken to some of the trees.

There are currently no major issues or liabilities within Ledston village. Leeds City Council has responsibility for tree maintenance and is scheduled to undertake some safety work later this year.

LEDSTON PARISH COUNCIL - 2022/3 Budget vs projected out-turn

ITEM	2022/23 Budget
Income - Parish Council	
Precept	£ 4,750.00
Local Council Tax Support Grant	£ 127.00
Allotment rent	£ 1,195.00
Total income Parish Council	£ 6,072.00
Income - Charity	£ 0
TOTAL INCOME	£ 6,072.00
Expenditure - Parish Council	
Clerk/RFO Salary (inc HMRC PAYE Payments)	£ 2,215.00
Clerks Expenses	£ 350.00
Training	£ 150.00
ICO Data Registration Fee	£ 35.00
Insurance	£ 380.00
Payroll Services (Autela)	£ 160.00
YLCA Membership	£ 136.00
External Audit Fees	£ 500.00
Internal Audit Fees (2 years)	£ 240.00
IT	£ 120.00
Bank Charges	£ 72.00
Website and e-mail account	£ 262.50
Defib maintenance	£ 105.00
Grants (Ledston in Bloom)	£ 200.00
Total expenditure – Council	£ 4,925.50
Expenditure - Charity	
Grass cutting	£ 800.00
ROSPA play equipment	£ 250.00
	£ -
Total expenditure Charity	£ 1,050.00
TOTAL INCOME (Council and charity)	£ 6,072.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (council and charity)	£ 5,975.50
RESERVES	
General Reserve	£ 1,655.45
Election Reserve	£ 2,329.00