

Killamarsh Parish Council Chairs Annual Report 2025

Executive Summary

The past year has seen further progress with Council objectives and activities. Additional increases in the cost-of-living crisis remain a challenge to both the public and the Council too. Despite those challenges, we were pleased to have continued to deliver on some key targets and ensure cost savings are made without adding additional financial burden to the Parish precept. Inflation continues to return towards its original 2% target level, though recent global political upheavals could still bring potential increases, so we remain vigilant around public spending to limit cost risks.

During the past 12 months, the Parish Suite has continued to build on delivering various events and private functions ensuring the space continues to be available to the public while being self-sustaining and less of a burden on the local taxpayer. The Killamarsh Community Hub has provided greater accessibility to the public, and smaller user groups have started to take advantage of the space in the Hub while being a more efficient and sustainable space for the Parish Council to operate from.

We continue to seek additional grants and funding sources to assist in improving community facilities and have also focused on carbon reduction by implementing solar technology at the community hub which also assists in energy cost reduction. We have also continued to focus on investment in some of the Parish owned parks and play areas, benches, and financial support for conservation work.

The village CCTV upgrade has taken place and has now become an effective tool in monitoring crime across our community and tracing incidents that take place across county borders. The intention of the CCTV is to promote safety and security in our community for residents and to reduce crime where possible as a deterrent.

The Council continues to look positively towards activities for the younger generation with Extreme Wheels having delivered both Winter indoor and Summer outdoor activities, and the Skate Park has seen more activity since the completion of the heavily grant funded refurbishment works. The Council remains focused on extending activities for a variety of age groups not covered by Extreme Wheels, alongside opportunities for employment and skills development for older age groups, working with various agencies and charity groups.

Over the past year the Council has focused on making operations more efficient and the team continue to focus on moving the Council forward and supporting Killamarsh residents through greater accessibility, more communication and purposeful activities that engage and support residents. The council has aimed to remain fiscally responsible and manage finances effectively to meet the needs of residents as far as possible, without burdening the community with additional unnecessary costs covered through taxation. With rising costs in Utilities, above inflation public sector pay rises etc., this has not been easy, while still supporting the Leisure Centre's loss.

Our Council

The Parish team are now well established in their permanent home in the Killamarsh Community Hub. The installation of the solar panel system has assisted in reducing costs for energy and has helped us move to more sustainable low carbon energy management. This is helping to combat rising energy costs for the Council.

The Parish Council team have focused on efficiency over the past year and enabling greater flexibility for the use of facilities and events on offer to the public. The Council intend on extending the variety of events and functions that can be made available to the public, while also concentrating on building the use of facilities for private functions to assist with the cost of running facilities to

reduce the burden on tax payers. The Council aims to focus on the environmental aspects of the village and deliver services that maximises outcomes for the local community.

Based on the forthcoming plan to merge Derbyshire District Councils with Derbyshire County Council, there is a potential for significant impacts on Parish Councils across Derbyshire. As part of the process, some of NEDDC's council activities could be devolved to local Parish Councils in the district, and as a result could impact on the need for re-skilling, additional staff and increased responsibilities and risks at parish level. It is Killamarsh Parish Council's intention to monitor this closely and prepare as far in advance as possible. We aim to fully engage in the devolution process at every opportunity to minimise risk to our Council and its services in the community.

It is currently unclear what impact these changes will have on costs overall to Council taxation given that District Councils will essentially no longer exist following a merger. It is however predicted that costs should reduce collectively as a result through economies of scale and reduced administration at the local and unitary authority levels, and a redistribution of Council Tax costs to counteract the changes should follow accordingly to address these changes. Killamarsh Parish Council encourages residents to remain aware of these changes as they progress.

Our Precept for 2024-25

In the last financial year 2024/2025 we were able to support a freeze on increase in our Parish precept (the parish part of the council tax bill), this came after a reduction of 6% in 2023/24, 10% in 2022/2023 and a reduction of 2% in 2021/2022, following the freeze during the previous year.

Whilst there becoming less opportunities to deliver a reduction in precept, we remain committed to residents receiving value for money from the Parish Council. We aim to ensure the needs of the community are met as far as possible through carefully controlled spending and improved fundraising. This has been aided during the past financial year by recovering overcharges from NEDDC for the Parish Suite service costs, and where possible obtaining additional funding from external agencies and bodies to support our activities, assisting in limiting ever growing costs.

Budgets are now allocated with limited contingency allowances to minimise any unexpected financial challenges that could arise during this current financial year. Flexibility has become limited due to rising costs. Continued, although decreasing, inflation has impacted upon the Council's costs over the past year as a residual issue. We have remained almost in-line with budget, with a limited overspend of approx. £1400 due to cost impacts of unexpected additional building repairs.

Following the end of our agreed 3 year upfront fixed subsidy part of our lease agreement with NEDDC for the staged handover of the sports centre to District, we have just made the first payment of the second phase of subsidy of £100k. The second phase subjects the Parish Council up to a maximum payment risk of £100k per year for the remaining two years.

This is based on the performance of the Sports Centre and any annual financial deficit it has. The total subsidy cost to the Parish Council for the last 4 years has been £625k, though we have continued to deliver all projects agreed and still reduce the precept by 18%. We are now at risk of a remaining maximum £100k for the current year, though this will depend on the performance of the Sports Centre through 2025/26.

It remains a substantial contrast from our previous direct financial liabilities of the sports centre's annual loss of £300k per year previously. Being funded and managed directly by NEDDC through collective district taxation has enabled greater economies of scale, investment and flexibility in operations providing a modernised leisure and sports offering across the district.

Although we have managed to maintain Council reserves at the legally required level, we continue to be vigilant in committing financial expenditure as finances remain volatile and need to be controlled carefully.

The Council's operational team remains stable and continues to build revenue from facilities while managing costs to ensure the financial burden of services on the community is minimised.

Neighbourhood Plan

We are now in the advance stages of the Neighbourhood Plan preparation, with an initial full draft complete and the first consultation process for the plan taking place on Monday 14 April 2025 and Sunday 27th April 2025. This will allow residents to review and recommend any adjustments to the plan before submission to the District Council for their amendments and approval, which will then be followed by a referendum.

Killamarsh Active

Concern was raised in the village that due to the high subsidy of £354k, the Leisure Centre (LC) was at risk however, the Parish Council have received written confirmation that the LC is not at risk of closure and the District Council has an updated plan in place and they are happy that the Centre continues to make sustained progress, with memberships rising and the new facilities such as the children's play area, the café and the integrated library, all continuing to see an increase in visitor numbers to Killamarsh to meet its ambitious business plan.

Rising energy and running costs have had, and continue to have, a detrimental effect on the original negotiated plan leading to the Leisure Centre still being behind on its projections. This means the Parish Council will face its full support cost of £100k for last year with a budgeted estimate of the full £100k for this year, and potentially the final 5th year. The District Council have confirmed they are willing to work with the Parish Council to ensure clarity of costs are understood.

In the meantime, the Parish Council continues to support the District Council financially on the agreed 5-year plan, while NEDDC continues to manage the Centre's financial projections and enable the facilities to become a sustainable going concern. We continue to encourage residents to visit Killamarsh Active to see what they have to offer and take advantage of the facilities wherever possible.

Skate Park

June 2024 also saw the official opening of the Killamarsh Skate Park, providing a custom-made set of ramps, rails and blocks for kids to develop skating and biking skills on, part funded by the Safer Streets Fund and UK Prosperity Fund. This is a great asset for the youngsters of Killamarsh and one of the newest and best to be developed in England at the time, according to the professionals present on the day, the use of which increases day by day.

Parish Suite

The Parish Suite is going from strength to strength, with a range of key social events again planned throughout the year with Christmas events already planned for December 25. I recommend that residents keep their eyes out for upcoming event notices that will be circulated over the coming months on various platforms and noticeboards.

The suite has been very well received, and events have been well attended. Some work is being undertaken to look at event costs and charges, but this is always a challenge to balance as the Parish Suite needs to meet its costs and avoid losses to minimise impact on taxpayers.

Since the suite reopened in December 2023, we have faced some challenges both with regulations and the lack of a gas supply in the main kitchen. We have worked very closely with the District and

County Councils and now have an agreed plan in place, with the fully equipped working kitchen aspect delivered at no cost to the Parish Council. Further work is in the process of being completed.

2024 saw the first of what is hoped to be many Good Companions events to entertain and bring together our local senior citizens. The initial event went very well, feedback was exceptional and included recommendations from residents as to what would benefit them at intended future events.

This has now been reviewed, and future events will be discussed at the Events Committee.

2024/25 saw Warm Winter Wednesdays delivered from the suite for the first time, this was to assist elderly and vulnerable residents who were able to attend and be provided with hot drinks, biscuits and warm food while listening to music, watching a movie or two, or just for conversation with likeminded folk. All days were well attended and very well received.

Scrutiny of the agreed lease costs with NEDDC identified some discrepancies and we have worked closely with them to correct this. This has resulted in corrections being made and further work being undertaken.

It's important to acknowledge and give thanks to our Parish Team for the effort and dedication in ensuring the continued development and success of the suite, and the rectification works that have been required over recent months.

Killamarsh Community Hub

The Community Hub is now the intended village focal point for community and Council contact, and whenever the Parish Office is open, it remains fully accessible to residents as promised. As a key part of the refurbishment, the building is now fully equipped with solar panels which should ensure we limit our climate impact and carbon reduction objectives while reducing energy costs for this building alone.

Community user interest in the building is continuing to grow steadily, with several groups continuing to use the space. All Parish Council Committee meetings and other meetings are now held in the hub, with Full Parish Council meetings now resumed in the refurbished Parish Suite.

Heritage Society

We had hoped to welcome to the Heritage Society during 2024/25, who had agreed to lease Room 2 in the Community Hub to deliver their heritage programme. As the hard work developed, sadly it was determined that the space didn't meet their needs, and the lease agreement was relinquished by them. We would like to wish the Heritage Group every success in finding a more suitable location in the village and will always support the excellent valuable work carried out by the group.

Allotments

Again, this year, I would like to thank Judy France our Deputy Clerk for the continued hard work that has gone in to carry out the regular monitoring of our allotments, and for ensuring concerns are frequently dealt with in a timely and efficient manner. Allotments remain at the required standard that is set in the policy, and the waiting list continues to slowly fall.

The Environment Committee is continuing to review pieces of land owned by the Council and by the District Council, to identify if any existing spaces that could be converted into further allotments, to ease the still high level of residents on the waiting list. This work is ongoing.

Cemetery

Our grounds maintenance supplier that we appointed in early 2024 to undertake work in our community, particularly the cemetery, has been a great improvement to its previous upkeep and the new supplier has been received exceptionally well, with village areas looking tidier and better maintained. The cemetery gates continue to close automatically each evening, though allow ample time for visitors to attend burial plots accordingly.

Christmas Lights & Seasonal Fixtures

During the Christmas period of 2024, as promised we have invested and delivered something more substantial to brighten up our Bridge Street shopping area, with brand new lamp post Christmas lights that are now powered directly via electricity and not solar battery. This initial phase is something new, with more fixtures to be added year on year extending this feature. In other areas of the village, we provided the usual Christmas trees for which we had requested improved lighting. We have noted concerns regarding our Christmas Lights displays, including the new directly wired in display on Bridge Street.

As such, we have started planning early for Christmas 2025. In doing so, we have achieved an excellent deal to double what we intended to install as part of the year-on-year lamp post decoration solution to improve the displays, with more colour options to create variety among the lighting options. There is still work to complete, though we aim for the visual displays Christmas to evolve while still seeking value for money.

The Council have also continued to invest in additional planters and lamp post hanging baskets in the village for flowers, as this adds visual appeal to the main areas of the village.

Remembrance Day

Remembrance Day 2024 took place as per the previous year, and thankfully we were able to secure the same marching band as 2023. The afternoon tea took place in the Parish Suite, which was attended by many residents. This was part funded by Derbyshire County Council Leadership Fund and donations.

VE Day 80th Anniversary

This year will see the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, with various events taking place across the village, including our VE Day 80th Anniversary event taking place on Sunday 11 May in the Parish Suite.

The Parish Council has been working with a local resident, who are organising a combined effort for our local businesses to be involved in decorating the Bridge Street area.

The Parish Council will be decorating the central streets with bunting and the normal process of the Poppy boards with the names on. In addition, floral displays in the street planters will be aimed to consist of red, white and blue to align with the Union Jack.

Summer Festival

June 2024 saw the Parish Council deliver its first Village Festival in almost a decade, following 2023's event which had to be cancelled due to adverse weather conditions. It provided a range of stalls and activities for families and children. As a smaller scale event, the festival was well received by those who attended. We have received feedback and views from residents and stall holders and the intention is to deliver a bigger and bolder event this year, on 19th July 2025. We are also planning to improve advertising for this event through more outlets where possible. We hope many residents will join us for a day that hopes to be fun and entertaining for families.

Environment & Outdoor Fixtures

Norwood Park renovation was received well; however, the park suffered some initial vandalism which was dealt with promptly, and the park continues to serve the younger children living around the Norwood area.

This year will see plans starting to develop in relation to the King Charles III park at Highmoor, working with schools initially and the seeking of grants to fund the project. We have already received approval to place on land we lease, and the aim is to deliver a fully funded project without further burden to the taxpayer as soon as possible.

New football goal's will shortly be installed at Birchlands, with a review being undertaken on which location will be better placed for a basketball play area.

The village has again seen several new dog poo bins installed or replaced as part of our ongoing plan to maintain key public spaces.

Also, after further tree inspections identified risks posed by certain trees and their current state in various locations around the village, more work has been undertaken to reduced or remove the risks to residents. This continues to be a high focus of the Parish Council to address as appropriate.

Rejuvenation of the Village Green has continued with further new flower boxes being installed and two new trees; to replace the one we had to remove following diagnoses of disease.

I would like to recognise the continued efforts and dedication of the Conservation Group to our community this past year with the regular upkeep of the wildflower areas and creation of further flowering green spaces across Killamarsh. As new projects settle in, we are starting to see an abundance of colours in bloom across various areas of Killamarsh and look forward to seeing more in the future

The Killamarsh Wombles continue to raise the bar in keeping our community clean and tidy through rain and shine and making sure fly-tipping and other nefarious activities are frequently reported to relevant authorities. Their dedication is second to none, and I share and reflect the gratitude that the community has for all that they do.

Community CCTV

Having worked closely with Derbyshire Police and the Safer Neighbourhoods Team, I am pleased to report that our village CCTV project has now been delivered in full, as promised, with cameras strategically placed across our village for the safety and security of our residents and their properties. Although there were some initial commissioning issues, these have now been ironed out, with some extremely helpful images being provided to South Yorkshire Police only very recently.

We have also started the process of looking to expand the provision with Green Lane now being approved for a further camera. This is being funded by some of the savings achieved on the current installation.

The installation of CCTV cameras was always intended to help assist in identifying and reducing areas of crime and anti-social behaviour, and to assist the local Police Safer Neighbourhoods team to undertake their duties to keep our community and our residents safe.

Speed Indicator Devices and Road Safety

The previous year saw the installation of three Speed Indicator Devices (SID's) and 3 alternatively positioned brackets around the village. Although early usage of the system quickly identified that some more work needed to be undertaken to bring them up to optimum standard, this was quickly picked up and looked at by our Environment Committee.

As the installation of the SID's were part of an initial trial, our busy areas have not met the standard expected. So, over the last year the Parish Council has been working with the County Council to look at the best way to resolve any issues and deliver the best operating outcomes. A solution is now in place and changes will be made over the coming months.

We have continued to look at ways we could assist our Schools with road safety in Killamarsh. Sadly, the initial response from Derbyshire County Council to reduce the speed limit around our schools to 20mph do not meet the County's policy requirements. Other aspects of road safety are being investigated, and various solutions are being explored.

Extreme Wheels and Activities for Young People

The Parish Council has again worked closely with Extreme Wheels to provide young residents with indoor youth activities throughout the winter months and has agreed to provide the indoor and outdoor services across the whole year, for a further 3 years with no increase to the taxpayer.

All activities are designed to meet the needs of our young site users and continue to be reviewed annually.

Extreme Wheels have now commenced their summer outdoor youth activity delivery program, after delivering another successful winter season of indoor events at the Community Hub. These continue to be well attended, providing our younger residents with activities that fill some of the recreational gaps outside of school and brings youngsters together in safe, secure environments.

The Council continues to look at ways of delivering events for a variety of age groups and welcomes ideas from the wider community in suggesting future activities. The Council also remains keen to support the inclusion of young people in some decision-making processes around events, activities and facilities aimed at their age groups as key stakeholders in the future of the village.

The Parish Council have continued to look at the options available to them to deliver on the potential for a form of Youth Council as we have promised. This work continues to progress.

Police Station

Work started late last year on the newly earmarked Police Station. This is now nearing completion, with the new facility now in situ and final completion works taking place. The Parish Council has welcomed the modernised facilities, and we look forward to the new station opening in the coming months. We are pleased that we will benefit from a facility that will have the capacity and capability to deliver a modern-day policing function in our village, which delivers for our residents effectively.

Westthorpe Development

The Parish Council, along with Residents Against Greenbelt Erosion (RAGE), continues to monitor work as the Westthorpe site undergoes preparation for building work to begin. We aim to keep the community informed as far as possible with key significant issues around the development. The Parish Council will continue its efforts to minimise any negative impacts on the community and hold both the developers and NEDDC accountable for any challenges that the community faces whilst development works are ongoing.

The process so far has seen Planning Enforcement visit the site on multiple occasions, and it was also raised at Full District Council meetings that there were grave concerns that the site was been run under builder powers and not as specified in relevant planning conditions. This continues to be monitored by NEDDC's Enforcement Team.

After initial concerns about the naming of the new roads, the Parish Council took action to ensure residents views were heard, but unfortunately due to the short timeframe we were only able to raise

a poll on Facebook. We were grateful to see residents respond quickly, and we were also pleased to receive information that the developers agreed to present most names that came out of the poll. These names were subsequently submitted to the Planning Department for final street names approval.

Pride of Killamarsh Awards

The inaugural Pride of Killamarsh 2024 awards event took place on Sunday 3rd November 2024 and was hailed a success at the warm and heartfelt event in the Parish Suite.

There were originally 3 categories due to receive awards for this initial event:

- Group Award
- Individual (18 and over) Award
- Individual (17 and below) Award

Unfortunately, the Individual (17 and below) Award did not receive any nominations.

The Group Award was won by the Killamarsh Wombles, whose nominations highlighted their dedication to keeping the village clean and tidy. Many describing their work as 'tireless, selfless and amazing.

The Individual (18 and over) Award was awarded to Lisa Fletcher of Dresses for Angels. Lisa's invaluable work in supporting families affected by still birth or miscarriage moved both nominators and judges alike.

Congratulations again to all the winners.

The Parish Council is already planning another awards event later in the year, aiming to reach an even broader audience by working with local radio and stepping up publicity efforts. We are also reviewing the categories, with more to follow hopefully.

SARP Memorial Plaque

Saturday 20th July 2024 saw the official unveiling of the SARP memorial plaque in the Parish Suite, marking 25 years since the closure of the vast majority of the SARP site by the end of 1999.

The plaque highlights the huge impact that Residents Against Sarp Pollution (RASP) had during 98-99 in fighting a large multi-national corporation to try and close the polluting plant in Killamarsh.

SARP UK (parent company France based Vivendi), had released a highly toxic orange Nitric-dioxide gas from a storage tank (on two occasions) in May 1998, leading to residents having to stay indoors to protect themselves from a 300ft plume of deadly gas that filled the local air.

The incinerator on the site was finally pulled down in 2004, and SARP UK no longer remained in Killamarsh. The plaque is testament to the efforts of residents to rid Killamarsh of the high-risk plant.

Beacon

The Parish Council are continuing to investigate the option to install a Beacon in the village. This is currently in the planning stage and more information will follow as the forthcoming Council year progresses. Initial investigations did not deliver positive news though work to find a solution is ongoing.

Devolution

At the latter part of 2024/25 we were informed that the government were to progress with the Local Government Reorganisation.

This has meant that Councils within Derbyshire have needed to outline their proposals for Local Government Reorganisation. Leaders of Derby City Council and the eight Borough and District Councils have set out two options. Both options propose a northern unitary council including High Peak, Derbyshire Dales, Chesterfield, North East Derbyshire, and Bolsover, with Amber Valley either joining the north or the south. The southern unitary council would include Derby City, South Derbyshire, and Erewash. Derbyshire County Council has put forward an alternative proposal for a single unitary authority. The government will consider these proposals before a final submission is required towards the end of November 2025.

The future is currently unknown, but residents should note that all options are still on the table at this present time.

The Future

The Parish Council's focus will remain on delivering the best overall outcomes for our community and improving our village by delivering as promised, while ensuring budgets are well managed in tandem. Killamarsh is your village, and we will always welcome and listen to residents' feedback, so should you feel there is something we could potentially deliver better for you then please let us know. Ideas are always welcome.

Whilst at the moment the Parish Council are not aware of any fallout from the Local Government Reorganisation, we need to be prepared and keep a close eye on decisions that are made throughout this process. There is real optimism that Parish Councils could play a key role in the future and take on more responsibilities, however it is worth noting that some have benefitted in other areas of the Country where this has happened already, while others not so much.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their patience, progress is often a long and challenging process, but we will continue towards developing better community facilities and services for all residents.