

Parish Council of Little Harrowden

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Parish Council Annual Report: May 2025 to April 2026



ANNUAL PARISH FORUM

22.04.26 – Little Harrowden Village Hall

Report from the council

We are always pleased to see residents at the Annual Parish and Council meetings and at the open forums on our monthly ordinary meetings. We welcome members of the village and beyond to attend. It is important that the Council represents the village effectively and to do this we have to hear from you, the residents.

Would you like to understand more about what we do? Do you have concerns to raise or ideas to share? Come and join us on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Little Harrowden Village Hall. Details of our meetings can be found at:

www.littleharrowdenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Council responsibilities for 2025-2026

1. **Internal Financial Controls Officer** Yvonne Blood
2. **Belgrove Park** Glynn Cotter
3. **Highways and Speed Signs** Glynn Cotter and Richard Davies
4. **Police Liaison** Clerk
5. **Neighbourhood Watch** Richard Davies
6. **Neighbourhood Plan** Dave Grout, Richard Davies, Glynn Cotter, and Clerk
7. **Village Hall** Yvonne Blood
8. **Footpath Warden** Glynn Cotter
9. **Community Speed Watch** Yvonne Blood
10. **Defib** Nikki MacKay

Changes to the Council

Unfortunately, there have been a few changes to the make-up of the Council over the last 12 months - mainly the resignations of Martin Arissol and Joanne Woods-Shepherd due to increasing work and family commitments so we currently have three vacant seats on the Parish Council. We thank them for their work on the Council.

With only six active Councillors, it does make the allocation of responsibilities difficult so we are very keen to fill the three remaining spots on the Council so would welcome applications from interested parties!

If you are interested in standing as a Councillor on one of these remaining seats, then please come and speak to a Councillor or contact Sylvia to get more information.

Introductions from our Chair, Vice Chair and our new councillor:

Cllr Richard Davies, Chair

The year has been focused on three main priorities:

- enhancing the quality of life for villagers through improvements,
- making the village safer through liaison with Highways/Planning to ensure our views are heard, and
- developing the Neighbourhood Plan.

We have made progress on all three fronts.

Improving the quality of life for villagers

We have continued to improve the facilities in the Pocket Park through the installation of a Climbing Frame and Zip Line with good feedback received. Also, in the park we have cleared some of the encroaching hedges to make more space and alleviate some issues for residents who back onto the park. We have also installed a footpath down to the dog walking area - we know that the surface is uneven so there is work planned to make it more "user friendly", although what we currently have is still better than the quagmire that we used to get during wet winters!

We are very fortunate to have the Park, as can be seen by the responses to the Neighbourhood Plan Survey, so we will continue to improve the facilities as and when we can.

We have also completed the refurbishment of the Telephone Box (with more shelves newly installed) which is well used by villagers. We have also, at long last, installed a sign to show where the Little Harrowden Primary School is!

Cllr Nikki MacKay, Vice Chair

I have lived in the village approximately 23 years and became a Parish Councillor in 2019. In 2024 I was elected as the Vice Chair.

I am passionate about ensuring our village is a positive place to live and to drive improvements forward where possible. I regularly attend meetings, support the Parish Chairman and chair meetings when needed.

I am responsible for ensuring the village defibrillator is working and update the app 'The Circuit.' The app ensures there is an audit trail for all; it also provides information for the emergency services regarding the status and location of the defibrillator in the event of an emergency.

My true passion is Sport and Medicine. I work full time within the Sports Medicine and education profession.

Outside of work I enjoy playing hockey for Kettering and captain the ladies' team, of which a big passion is engaging and developing females in sport.

I can often be found running through the village, mountain biking, outdoor swimming, sailing and paddleboarding.

Cllr Henry Reynolds

Although I now live just outside the parish boundary, Little Harrowden is the centre of my existence; I have either lived in it, worked in it or both for the entirety of my life.

In common with many previous generations of my family, my businesses (farming and engineering) are based in the parish, so I have a very deep connection with the place and its community.

Benjamin Wooding, the first chairman of the Parish Council was my great, great grandfather, and various others of the family, including my father, have served on the council, so there is perhaps destiny at work in my joining. It is a great honour to be a part of a council which is achieving so much and has such an inclusive approach.

1. Finance and Internal Controls – Cllr Blood

The PC proves to be in a solid financial position with the bank balance at the end of the financial year 31st March 2026 being £18,373.62.

Many improvements have been made in the village including:

- Installing a climbing wall and zip wire in Belgrove Park.
- The red phone box has undergone refurbishment and is now a lending library for use of anyone in the village.
- The PC have installed new VAS and traffic calming signs making the village a safer place to be.
- The Neighbourhood Plan which began in 2025 by residents completing a survey is still ongoing.
- The PC have applied for and been successful in winning grants toward the cost of the new VAS units and raised an amazing £8,275.58 which will go towards the cost of three new units.

We are always open to suggestions on how to improve the village amenities and give all ideas full consideration as a Parish Council.

The level of reserves held is at a satisfactory level as we move into the 2026/27 financial year and full details can be found at the end of this document.

2. Belgrove Park – Cllr Cotter

The council have once again made significant improvement to the pocket park. After the installation of the monkey challenge wall, further investment has been made in the Zip Wire and new signage. The Council will also be investigating further options to improve the park over the coming months, and we invite local children to have an input to those ideas.

The monthly inspections have resulted in minor maintenance being undertaken to fencing, the bench in the dog walking meadow and wet pour safety flooring in the play area.

The council will continue to monitor the walkway to the dog walking meadow and the fencing around Belgrove park, which is starting to show its age.

In the dog walking meadow, the council reduced the frequency and coverage of grass cutting which helped stimulate improved eco diversity, a topic which will feature more heavily in future planning.

3. Highways and Speed Signs – Cllrs Cotter and Davies

Road Safety

We have purchased a new mobile VAS sign which makes collection of speeding data easier and have another two signs on their way.

We have also had constructive dialogue with Highways about installing a pedestrian footpath along Wellingborough Road up to Great Harrowden.

Our objections to the Glenvale Park Phase 2 development and request for Section 106 Funding to alleviate the direct road safety impacts of the development were ignored. We were not invited to the Planning Meeting which raised serious concerns regarding procedural fairness, transparency, and the proper consideration of local stakeholder input under the Local Government Act 1972.

As a consequence, having followed the prescribed process for registering complaints, we have now submitted a formal complaint regarding the performance of NNC's Deputy CEO.

VAS Speed Signs

The Council have secured a new VAS sign after reliability of the old signs continued to deteriorate which limited the data collection on both Hilltop and Hardwick Road. The new sign appears to be working well, with an immediate impact of lower speeds being measured on vehicles coming into the village from Orlingbury. The Council are in the process of securing additional VAS signs to replace the older ones.

Over the last year, measurements have shown that speeds observed have at worst, remained level, and in some cases, there has been marginal improvement.

The main findings from the data collected over the year is that peak volumes of traffic have increased significantly. Traffic volumes from Orlingbury Road are up 65% during the morning rush hour and up 20% on Hilltop.

In the afternoon rush hours, Hardwick Road is up 10% and Orlingbury Road up 25%.

These numbers suggest the village is increasingly being used as a cut through, making it more difficult for villagers to get in and out of the village at peak times.

- **Hardwick Road - Incoming**

Incoming speeds on Hardwick Road measured in March remain at the same levels as June '25 at an average of 30mph and 85th percentile at 38mph.

Afternoon peak volumes have increased by around 10% to 400-450 vehicles per hour between 1600 & 1800.

- **Hilltop Road - Incoming**

Comparing data from June '25 to February '26, average speeds have fallen from 39mph to 31mph.

Morning (0700-0900) peak vehicle volumes in February have increased by around 20% over June '25.

- **Orlingbury Road - Outbound**

Outbound speeds towards Orlingbury Road, measured in January, are lower than those measured in August '25 at 28mph versus 31mph.

Afternoon peak volumes have increased by around 25% to 330-400 vehicles per hour between 1600 & 1800.

- **Orlingbury Road - Incoming**

The new speed sign placed on Orlingbury Road appears to be having a positive effect, with the average speeds down 4mph to 25mph and 85th percentile speed falling 5mph to 30mph in March (versus December '25).

Morning peak volumes have increased by around 65% since August '25 to 350-400 vehicles per hour between 0700 & 0900.

4. Police Liaison – Clerk

The Parish Council, through its Police Liaison Officer, has maintained regular engagement with local policing teams throughout the year, ensuring that residents are kept informed via consistent Facebook updates covering the latest police news, reported incidents, and ongoing operations within the area.

Recent communications have highlighted a particular focus by the police on tackling violent domestic crime and addressing anti-social behaviour, both of which remain key priorities within Little Harrowden.

In response, and recognising the importance of early intervention, the Parish Council intends to introduce targeted focus groups for children and young people within the village. These sessions will seek to better understand their needs, interests, and concerns, with the aim of identifying meaningful activities and potential improvements to the play area.

By actively engaging younger residents and incorporating their input, the Council aims to reduce boredom-related nuisance behaviour and foster a stronger sense of community responsibility and positive citizenship.

5. Neighbourhood Watch - Cllr Davies

I took back responsibility following the resignation of Martin Arissol. There have been further sessions with Danielle Stone regarding anti-social behaviour and road safety. One of the key takeaways was that e-scooters are a cause for concern, with Operation Journey recently seizing 120 illegal e-bikes.

Neighbourhood Watch Week is Monday 1st to Sunday 7th June.

6. Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Grout

The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to give the local community greater influence over planning decisions, guide sustainable development, and protect the village's character while meeting future needs.

Neighbourhood Plans form part of what is statutorily allowed to be developed and once adopted, are used by the Local Authority planning department to decide on planning applications.

Significant progress has been made throughout the last year with the Big Neighbourhood Survey engaging and listening to the village and our community.

The survey was distributed village wide and received an amazing 33% response rate and we followed this up with a successful business survey which received a 25% response rate.

Feedback was collected on housing needs, green spaces, heritage, traffic concerns, and local facilities. The key emerging themes found are:

- Strong support for protecting the village's rural character.
- Concern about traffic speeds and road safety.
- Desire for small-scale, appropriate housing development.
- Importance of safeguarding green spaces and views.

We also have a great group of volunteers on our Steering Group who have compiled evidence including the:

- Housing Needs Assessment
- Site assessments for potential development locations
- Heritage and character appraisal of the village
- Environmental and landscape considerations
- Review of planning policies in the Local Plan

This evidence base as well as the village consultations and events will ensure that the Plan is robust and defensible.

The Parish Council has received excellent support from the NNC Neighbourhood Planning Consultant who will help guide us through the various stages required to develop then submit the plan, ensuring that all the necessary legal requirements are met.

The plan will include policies covering:

- Design and character
- Housing mix and scale
- Local Green Space designation
- Protection of important views
- Community facilities
- Transport and road safety considerations
- A parish nature recovery plan

The project is now in the consultation phase but there is still a lot of work to complete before formal submission.

The Neighbourhood Plan is a significant community-led initiative which will shape the future of Little Harrowden. The Parish Council is committed to fully engaging with the community to put together a comprehensive evidence base that reflects the communities needs and wishes but still positions the Plan to be successfully approved.

The continued collaboration between residents, the Parish Council, and North Northamptonshire Council will be essential to ensure the plan is successful and works for Little Harrowden.

7. Village Hall - Cllr Blood

This is my second year as the Parish Council representative on Little Harrowden Village Hall committee and what a year it has been. I attend meetings on a regular monthly basis and as well as making decisions with the rest of the committee if needed I answer any queries/questions relevant to the PC that may arise during the meeting. I am also at the Cafe on a Thursday to help residents with any questions or queries they may have. If I am unable to answer directly I take their details and forward these on to the Clerk.

The village hall committee changed at the last AGM and since then a lot has happened for the good of the VH and residents. Improvements have been made and gradually the VH is being brought into the 21st century.

The cafe is thriving. Bookings are increasing providing the necessary funding. Thanks must go to the committee and the team of volunteers who work endlessly behind the scenes to provide the residents with a VH to be proud of.

8. Footpath Warden – Cllr Cotter

We consider ourselves very lucky that Little Harrowden has a plethora of wonderful footpaths for residents to enjoy the countryside.

The Council monitors these footpaths throughout the year. Whilst the Council does not have a statutory duty to maintain the footpaths, they are able to notify North Northants Council when issues are noticed through the year. For example, during 2025 we helped get the gates and bridges fixed on the two pathways to Orlingbury as well as clearing undergrowth on the paths from Hilltop to Isham and from the school to Orlingbury.

9. Community Speed Watch – Cllr Blood

Northamptonshire Police Road Safety Team hold a Speedwatch Campaign each year throughout the county for the villages and towns wishing to take part and I am the coordinator for Little Harrowden. Up to and including last year the equipment was issued by the Police and could only be used for one month. However, this year the villages and towns were given the opportunity of purchasing the equipment and being able to use it between March and September. LHPC agreed to the purchase of the equipment as they felt it would be of great benefit to the residents in making the village safer by slowing the vehicles down and those that exceeded the speed limit would receive a letter from the Police.

The scheme is completely dependent on volunteers who give up their time to improve road safety in the village where they live. Each session lasts for one hour when details of excessive speeds are recorded and then passed to the Road Safety Team for them to take the appropriate action which can at worst scenario result in a driver losing their licence. So far since 1st March until 9th April we have been at various locations within the village and been active for 12 hours resulting in a total of 14 vehicle's details being recorded. It may not seem a lot, but it is a vital campaign which goes a long way to making our roads safer and hopefully means that 14 drivers are now more aware of the speed limit. It doesn't matter where you are driving, you should ALWAYS be aware of the limit on that particular road.

On the recent North Northants Planning Survey some of the remarks were regarding regular speeding in the village. Whilst the PC does all it can by using VAS signs there is no better way to make our roads safer than making drivers aware of the speed limits in Little Harrowden. The more volunteers we have means the more hours we can do the Speedwatch for which, as a result, educates more drivers.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact me for further details at cllrybloodlhpc@gmail.com.

This is a vital campaign which goes a long way to making our roads safer for longer, so join in and become part of the team!

10. Defib, Cllr MacKay

The Defib was replaced 20th March 2026, this was slightly earlier than anticipated. This was due to the current pads no longer being manufactured and were due to expire imminently and therefore the unit had to be replaced. The defib unit was due to expire later this year. Whilst it was changed earlier than anticipated, the cost was expected.

The unit is located on the outside wall of the village hall and is accessible 24hrs a day.

The new Defib is a Primedic, model HeartSave YA. The pads expire 15th July 2030.

We check the defib monthly with the app 'The Circuit' updating the status and location of the defibrillator to ensure it is visible to the emergency services who use this app to locate working defibs in the event of an emergency.

Councillors who have served on the Parish Council in the past year are as follows:

- Richard Davies, Chairman
- Nikki MacKay, Vice Chairman
- Yvonne Blood
- Glynn Cotter
- David Grout
- Henry Reynolds
- Joanne Woods-Shepherd (resigned)
- Martin Arissol (resigned)

And lastly a few more words of thanks...

From park assessments to community speed watch, the village hall to the phone box library; we would like to thank all those willing residents who step up time and time again to help make Little Harrowden safe, fun, educational, and beautiful.

We cannot thank you all enough.

You are amazing and you make Little Harrowden a great place to live, work and enjoy.

Appendix A

Little Harrowden Parish Council

Summary of accounts year ended 31 March 2026

	Year End	Budget
Income as detailed below	£31,800.00	£31,800.00
Income from grants, loans, and donations	£9,040.79	
Expenditure as detailed below	£67,180.03	
Carry forward 2025	£41,981.42	
Surplus for the year (exc VAT)	£15,642.18	
Surplus for the year (inc VAT)	£18,373.63	

Income

Precept	£31,800.00	£31,800.00
Interest received	£0.00	£0.00
Income from grants, loans, and donations	£9,040.79	
VAT refund for 2024/25 received in 2025/26	£2,731.45	
Total income	£43,572.24	£31,800.00

Expenditure

Clerk salary	£10,544.71	£6,000.00
Clerk/council expenses	£1,883.76	£1,990.00
Streetlights running costs	£2,846.29	£4,000.00
Festive lights	£789.12	£300.00
Grass & hedge cutting, roadside maintenance	£5,640.09	£6,000.00
VAS Highways safety	£4,662.88	£8,000.00
Grit Bins	£0.00	£250.00
Play Area Improvement	£32,792.49	£5,000.00
Play Area Maintenance	£3,473.82	£2,150.00
Village Asset Maintenance	£996.00	£3,790.00
Defib	£50.00	£150.00
Audit fee	£739.80	£750.00
Membership subscriptions	£587.10	£600.00
Training	£715.20	£2,500.00
Insurance	£765.66	£1,200.00
Admin/Stationery	£371.11	£700.00
Grants given	£322.00	£0.00
VAT (to be reclaimed)	£8,224.61	
Total expenditure (exc VAT)	£58,955.42	£43,380.00

Reconciliation of bank balances for year ended 31 March 2026

Current account balance 01.04.25	£41,981.42
Total income for year	£43,572.24
Less Total expenditure for the year	£67,180.03
	£18,373.63
Represented by closing balance 31.03.26	£18,373.63