

MARCH PARISH UPDATES

Budget

SKDC enters a new financial year with the goal of protecting the high quality of our services in spite of the challenging financial times faced by all local authorities.

We are streamlining costs and ensuring value for money, whilst capping reductions in council tax, to prevent local residents from sharing the burdens of these challenges in a world of rising living costs.

While practicing fiscal prudence, we are still making it possible to expand our initiatives for dealing with homeless, climate change, and mental health.

Our commitment remains to provide high quality housing across South Kesteven, both affordable private and social housing, and we are making funds available for any improvements that may be required to social houses to meet our tenants needs.

By-Election Results

Last week, by-elections took place in both the Aveland and Isaac Newton Wards, and I was delighted to welcome our newest councillors, Richard Dixon-Warren and Ben Green respectively.

Both were excellent candidates who brought energy, passion, and local knowledge to their campaigns and will, no doubt, bring the same to their new roles in SKDC.

Not only do we have enthusiastic new councillors but we also see an end to the period of purdah, which will allow myself and my colleagues to more clearly spread the word about the important months ahead for the Council.

Festivals Update

We have a wide range of events and activities across the district in the months ahead, starting with the Grantham Folk Festival on 19th March featuring folk artists from all over the country.

Later that evening, we will see the Bourne in Lights events in which North Street will be illuminated with exhibits, projections, and live performances.

On 26th March, Grantham will also be hosting a youth festival, with a temporary skate part, street art, music and entertainment to give our younger residents a great day out.

Finally, the Deepings Literary Festival is taking place between 27th April-1st May and will have sessions from a variety of accomplished novelists about the process of writing.

Many of these events were funded by the Welcome Back Fund, which has continued to help our high streets recover from the impact of the COVID lockdown by supporting residents return to our public spaces.

Stamford Arts Centre

My colleague and Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy, Cllr Rosemary Trollope-Bellew, wrote recently in the Mercury to allay unwarranted fears within our community about the future of our local Arts Centre.

As Cllr Trollope-Bellew pointed out, an independent review highlighted the fact that 11 percent of SKDC's total expenditure was being spent on arts and festivals, which is sadly unsustainably high.

Despite the reduction in numbers attending shows since the start of the COVID pandemic, we remain committed to the arts in general and our Arts Centre in particular.

There have been changes to the staffing of the Arts Centre is and there will be changes to box office services, however, there will still be services for booking tickets in-person and over the phone.

There is a wide variety of shows planned for the Spring season and there will be much more to come in the future as we ensure an exciting and sustainable arts centre.

InvestSK

We have made the decision to bring our economic growth company, InvestSK, back in-house to relieve the administrative burdens on the team and to help bring about a more integrated approach to economic growth in the Council.

The InvestSK team have done amazing work, proving essential in helping the Council support local businesses to navigate the COVID pandemic and access government grants.

By creating a more joined-up approach, we will be putting economic growth at the centre of what we do to help deliver a thriving local economy for our residents and businesses.