

January 2025

Dear Lostock Gralam Residents,

At the January parish council meeting, members considered and agreed the precept request for 2025/26—the Parish Council's portion of the Council Tax payment.

The parish council has always strived to keep any increases to a minimum, recognising the cost-of-living challenges that residents face. However, like many other organisations, the parish council has experienced significant increases in the cost of delivering services, compounded by the Government's decision to raise employers' national insurance contributions. This increase affects not only the council directly but also the cost of contracted services, such as grass cutting, church bin emptying, and play area maintenance, including repairs and inspections.

In addition, the parish council must purchase new Christmas tree lights for 2025, as the aging lights previously used are no longer adequate. In 2024, the council was loaned eight sets of lights to temporarily address this issue. While the parish council does have general reserves, these have been depleted over the past five years as the council has maintained precept increases at or around 3%.

Making the decision to increase the precept was not taken lightly, given the ongoing financial challenges faced by the country and our community. Every effort was made to keep the increase as small as possible. For a Band D property in 2025/26, the precept will equate to less than 81p per week, or £41.99 per year—still significantly below the 2024/25 national precept average of £85.88.

The council is responsible for maintaining several community assets, including the Stubbs Lane play area, three flower planters, church and play area bin emptying, CCTV at the Stubbs Lane play area, and a public-access defibrillator. Additionally, the council provides grants to local organisations and community groups, such as Lostock Tiny Tots, Lostock Mother & Toddler Group, Lostock Gralam Primary School, and the St. John's Churchyard. It also hosts an annual community Christmas light switch-on event, which includes purchasing a 20-ft Christmas tree for the Hall Lane traffic lights.

The 2025/26 precept budget increase of 15.1% aims to ensure that the parish council can maintain its existing services, enhance the parish, and deliver new projects in the future.

On behalf of the Parish Council



L Sandison

Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer