

Update for Longman Parish Council

April 2024

Please accept my apologies that I am unable to join you at your upcoming meeting. I do however have the following updates for the parish.

Chancellor's Spring Budget Update

I am delighted to commend the Chancellor's spring budget, which brings about significant tax cuts benefiting working families across our constituency. With the main rate of employee National Insurance Contributions (NICs) reduced from ten percent to eight percent, over 27 million working individuals will experience a boost in their pay packets, amounting to an average tax cut exceeding £900 for those earning £35,400 annually. This reduction marks the lowest effective personal tax rate since 1975, underscoring the government's commitment to supporting hardworking people.

Additionally, changes to the high-income Child Benefit Charge, including raising the threshold and halving the rate of Child Benefit withdrawal, will provide significant relief for families, with some parents set to benefit by an average of £1,260. These measures, coupled with the extension of fuel and alcohol duty freezes, demonstrate the government's dedication to easing financial burdens on families and fostering economic growth.

£6.9m for SEND Funding in East Sussex

I am pleased to announce that East Sussex County Council will benefit from a substantial funding injection of £6,696,429 aimed at supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as well as those in alternative provision (AP). This funding, part of the Government's broader commitment to invest a record annual sum of £850 million in councils, underscores the Government's dedication to providing high-quality education tailored to the needs of every child. With the aim of creating new places for young people with SEND and AP in mainstream and special schools, this initiative seeks to offer specialised support for children facing various challenges such as autism, learning difficulties, and mobility issues.

Supporting the Ban on the Import of Hunting Trophies

I have stood in support of a crucial bill in Parliament aimed at banning the import of hunting trophies from approximately 6,000 species, including majestic creatures like lions, elephants, rhinos, and polar bears. This legislative effort builds upon the groundbreaking Ivory Act, which has been in effect since 2022, significantly limiting the trade and import of elephant ivory in the UK. The devastating impact of trophy hunting on endangered species, as highlighted by research from Oxford University, underscores the urgency of this measure, particularly evidenced by the alarming decline in African lion populations. I am proud to have contributed to this effort.

Halting HMRC Plans to Close the Phone Lines over Summer

I would like to express my appreciation for Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's decision to intervene and suspend HMRC's plans to close their phone lines over the summer. HMRC's initial proposal to suspend phone services for six months, from April to September, raised concerns among taxpayers who rely on telephone assistance for their tax-related queries. I have been contacted by many concerned residents about issues they are having getting through to HMRC on the phone. We must see an improvement in the service so that residents can quickly and easily resolve any issues.

Expansion of the Boiler Upgrade Scheme

I would like to take the opportunity to praise the government's decision to modify the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, facilitating support for properties off the gas grid. The scheme now offers grants of up to £7,500 for households seeking to transition to air source or ground source heat pumps. Notably, the government has eased the requirement for properties to have no outstanding Energy Performance Certificate recommendations for loft and cavity wall insulation, potentially saving households £2,500 in costs. Recognising the suitability of ground source heat pumps for rural properties, the government plans to increase the capacity limit for shared ground loops from 45kW to 300kW, aiming to distribute the infrastructure costs more evenly. Moreover, the government will introduce flexibility into regulations to potentially adjust grant levels for off-grid properties in the future, while maintaining simplicity.

Funding Boost for Schools across the Constituency

I welcome the announcement of a £2.2 million increase in funding for schools within the Lewes Constituency for the 2024-25 academic year compared to the previous year. This increase is part of the total school revenue funding in England, which amounts to £59.6

billion for the same period, resulting in the highest ever real-terms per pupil funding. The boost translates to approximately £35,000 extra for a typical primary school with 200 pupils and around £200,000 additional funding for a typical secondary school with 900 pupils. Notably, schools have the autonomy to allocate the additional funding as they see fit, whether on staffing, classroom materials, or other operational expenses.

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