

## **Report of the Parish Council Chair to the Annual Parish Meeting 2022**

This is my first report as Chair of the Parish Council.

I was co-opted onto the Council in June last year after my predecessor, Chris Lakeland had stepped down due to ill health. Tragically Chris died last October.

I make no pretence at being an adequate replacement for Chris. He is an impossibly hard act to follow. Hard working, witty, knowledgeable and passionately committed to serving the community.

My good fortune however is that I inherited an excellent Clerk and a great group of Councillors, each of whom has much to offer and, crucially, is prepared to take responsibility for individual initiatives and projects. In this report I do not single out any particular councillors, they are all hard working volunteers and make an effective contribution within the constraints of busy lives.

My personal view of the main events of the year is as follows:

### **Councillors**

Miriam Jacobs stepped down as a councillor because of pressures on her time after serving for 7 years. We owe a huge thank you to Miriam for her advice and contribution during her time on Council.

We have been fortunate to co-opt two new councillors during the year in Lee Robinson and Camilla Burrow who bring valuable skills to the Council together with the added benefit of substantially lowering our average age.

### **Village Hall**

It has been a relief and pleasure to have our refurbished village hall back again. The feedback indicates that the community is delighted with the improvements and it is good to see a steady rise in its utilisation. Massive thanks are due to Steve White who led the task of overseeing the building works, to Bruce Gibson who as Chair of the trustees has overall responsibility for the management of the hall and of course to Chris.

### **Clubhouse**

Similarly, it is great to have the Clubhouse back in operation. After a period during which it was controlled by a Community Interest Company, it has been brought back under the control of the Parish Council. During the year we have invested in a new heating system, furniture and a number of improvements for the hall. We have also recruited a manager, Evi Holroyd, to administer the two halls and it is gratifying to note that bookings have also steadily increased. Previously the Clubhouse was run at a significant loss (mainly due to a crippling expensive heating system) and although it is early days it is now breaking even.

### **Amazons**

One of the most refreshing aspects of the year has been the emergence of the girls football team, known as the Amazons. They utilise our recreation ground and part of the Clubhouse and bring much enthusiasm to the village when they are playing.

### **Infrastructure**

The maintenance of the physical equipment and amenities of the village is an important role for the Council. We have an excellent Lengthman (a 17th century term for head of maintenance!) in David Hollick. During the year David has continued to maintain our green spaces and play areas with the support of Council and Councillors (from time to time), in the repairs and upgrades when required.

### **Roads**

Roads and pavements are financed through the County Council and are not the responsibility of the Parish. We can however lobby for improvements on behalf of the village. For example we have made the case for a 20mph speed limits on the London Road and Bessels way. Through Chris Lakeland we have also helped to introduce Speed Watch in the village and plan to have further discussion with the County Council about other traffic calming measures.

### **Finances**

Funding for the Parish Council principally comes through the Precept which is collected from all households through the Council Tax. The cost to the village is approximately £7 per household per month. The precept last year was £68,250. In addition, we received income of £8,170 principally from the Clubhouse and cemetery fees. Our total operating costs (including improvements) were some £84,000. With careful budgeting & reserves over the years and in spite of the pandemic, the precept and other income have covered our normal operating costs and our reserves, together with some CIL monies (paid by developers as a condition of planning permission), have provided resources for investment in better facilities.

### **And finally**

Thank you to our staff, Liz Cooper, David Hollick and Evi Holroyd for their hard work and commitment, to our excellent Councillors and of course to the community for your encouragement and support.

Dermot Mathias  
27.4.2022