

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL PARISH MEETING REPORT: 2016

First of all my thanks to all members of the Council for their continued hard work and for the support they have given me as Chairman. I am particularly indebted to Colin Phillips who took on the duties of Chairman when I was unable to be present.

This year has seen a number of changes to personnel on the Parish Council and I am pleased to report that we are now almost fully quorate with just one vacancy for the Powick ward.

It is with particular sadness that we give thanks for the life and work of Powick Councillor David Hall who passed away during this year and our best wishes go to his wife Liz,

I must also wish Peter Harris all the very best in his recovery from an earlier stroke and we look forward to welcoming him back to the Council when he feels up to it.

As you will recall from a few years ago the Council has been committed to some key principles and these are still what steers our work . Just to remind you these are as follows

- To have a PC that is solvent and not a burden to the Parish taxpayers
- To develop through sound financial management sufficient funds to support a significant amenity for use by parishioners
- To protect and enhance the environment through a sustainable approach to all our activities
- By working with a range of partners to ensure a good quality of life for all in the Parish
- Actively to support local groups that provide community facilities in the parish and where possible to support local business
- To maintain and promote the positive identity of the parish

On a more upbeat note we have recruited three new Councillors during the past year and are grateful for the contributions that Mike Richmond, Jane Price and John Foy are making to the work of the Council

The main focus of interest throughout the parish in recent months has undoubtedly been dealing with residents worries over the plethora of Planning applications that have resulted from the perceived opportunities that a lack of a District Plan has engendered. Landowners and developers have sought to use up many inappropriate spaces to increase housing stock and this has led to a number of difficult meetings; permission has been granted eventually for some 200 new houses in the Parish and this will inevitably affect both the nature of the village and its rural character. The Parish Council is seeking to ensure that we help to provide the infrastructure that can support this development but do have a challenge when seeking additional support from higher authority.

As ever we have endeavoured to maintain a level of transparency; whilst we have lost the services of our accounting expert Jonathan Gwilt , the Clerk has taken over the duty of establishing the new CALC recommended accounts system which has enabled us to keep a clear eye on our financial situation.

Prudent financial husbandry has meant we have been able to continue to support some significant schemes in the Parish which will result in benefits to many parishioners. We are also aware that there may still be a possibility that we have a responsibility in future for contributions toward the Housing Benefit Allowance for claimants within the Parish. As a result, the Council agreed to increase the precept by the rate of inflation in this financial year.

This, together with our continued preoccupation with potential flood damage, means that we have maintained a reserve which will enable us to meet any such demands.

Additionally, the Council has been able to support the following projects

1. Rural Rate relief for businesses within the Parish where our participation in the scheme has enabled local businesses to attain around £12k of rate relief
2. Lighting Scheme for around a contribution of £5k pa
3. The Grant Award Scheme which has benefitted local organisations to the tune of over £4k this year
4. The provision of improved bus shelter facilities in the parish which has enabled passengers and schoolchildren to wait in greater comfort. This has been a partnership with the County Council and we have invested around £6k in these schemes
5. Continued support for the Lengthsman Scheme.
6. Development of the Hospital Lane Field - work will begin on meeting some of the planning conditions for this scheme shortly on order for us to meet those conditions within the time scale. The Steering Group will reconvene soon so as to be able to move the funding programme forward and to consider the ramifications of new residential development on the adjoining Hospital Lane 'sheep' field.
7. Support for the CEPFA

All of these are designed to improve the quality of life for parishioners and we shall try to maintain this approach in the forthcoming year.

Andrew Lamb
Chairman