

Yaxley Parish Council

Annual Report 2008-9

This is an overview of Yaxley Parish Council's activities during the past year.

We have during the past year had two new additions to our staff. These are Mrs Julie Barker and Mr Luke Turney and I hope that both will remain with us for many years.

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Achievements

This has been a very full and trying year. Having completed the Queen's Park Pavilion last year the Council has been heavily involved in maximising the possible use of the facility and overcoming the ongoing unforeseen complications that have arisen. The demand for use of the facility has been fantastic and thankfully enjoyed by both sexes and all ages.

The CCTV around the Shopping Centre and the recreation field that I referred to last year is now up and running and given Parishioners a little more confidence to use these areas without feeling intimidated by the youth that congregate from time to time.

Playing Field Committee

This committee is responsible for all the areas dedicated to recreational activities including play equipment. The running of Queen's Park sports facility has now been transferred to this Committee.

All play areas, owned by the Parish Council, have regular inspections and work is ongoing to maintain the high standard required.

As stated last year, due to vandalism, this Committee has been compelled to replace the fencing that surrounds the all-weather facility on the recreation ground. This fencing had become extremely dangerous and was beyond repair. The replacement fence we have installed is of a very high standard and due to its strength and construction vandalism should be greatly reduced. Cost in total was £37,089.00. A youth shelter has been erected in the recreation ground and is in regular use. This was funded using section 106 moneys allocated to this area. Other work carried out included running repairs to play equipment etc. The lighting along the path at the top of the recreational ground from Middleton's Road to Landsdowne Road is being upgraded.

A landscaping project has been completed at the Queen's Park to a cost of £5,750.00. Queen's Park still requires more groundwork but with our financial constraints in place we will have to spread this out over the next few years. I would at this point like to thank our Councillor David Stafford who donated his time and energy to plant a tree belt along the northern edge of Queen's Park nearest to the new Pavilion. The Council are very grateful.

Vandalism has reduced this year but remains an ongoing problem.

Allotments and Byways Committee

This Committee is responsible for all open spaces, roads and verges as well as the allotments.

The take-up of allotments is at an all time high with no vacancies and a waiting list. Security of the allotments is an on going issue but we can see no practical or cost effective way to resolve this problem.

The maintenance and planting of flowerbeds is ongoing in certain areas around the village and I feel improvements are still needed to provide the level required, but our workforce do have a large village to maintain and are working hard to improve the flowerbeds.

This year we have replaced various litterbins and benches, seats etc around the village that are supposedly vandal proof. Only time will tell. Total cost £3,408.71.

A forthcoming project is to improve the pathway that crosses the recreation area between Middleton's Road and Landsdowne Road. This Committee will continue to strive to better the facilities provided.

Amenity Centre Committee

This committee is responsible for the operation and management of the Amenity Centre facilities.

We have, this year, replaced the kitchen in the Austin Hall for a cost of £5,963.50. We have also replaced all the catering equipment in the halls required for the hall lettings, cost £451.16. Replacement curtains have been fitted in the Owen Pooley Hall, cost £2,225.00. A replacement external kitchen door to the Austin Hall has been fitted and the Fire Exit to the rear of the building repaired, cost £890.00. Other regular maintenance and repairs are ongoing.

We have had to repair a large area of the tarmac in the entrance to the Amenity Centre car park costing £2,120.00. The parking area has, due to wear conditions, required relining by Ringway for a cost of £1,109.81.

The main project for this Committee is to replace the corridor and cupboard space connecting both halls and toilet block to incorporate disabled use. This is a single brick structure with a flat roof and no insulation that dates back 50 years plus and is extremely cold and damp. We anticipate this to be a two to three year project depending on funding.

Cemetery Committee

This Committee is responsible for the operation and management of the cemetery and maintenance of the closed church and burial ground.

Work is still ongoing within the cemetery and I feel our staffs have made great progress cutting back the undergrowth and thinning out the trees around the cemetery. Ongoing maintenance is required to paths. We are taking strong steps to regain the quality and presentation expected by the village. You may all be aware that the Parish Council has been in the news regarding the cemetery. It is the Parish Councils view that this place of rest, should be kept to a standard that will stand the test of time and will still give the appearance of a well-maintained area. An updated list of regulations and guidelines showing the acceptable standard has been prepared and will be posted on the notice board and the web site. Maintenance of this are will be an ongoing priority.

It still remains one the committee's highest priority to obtain suitable land for the expansion needed, as our current burial space is limited.

Finance and General Purposes Committee

This Committee is responsible for managing the Council's finances, reviewing planning applications, the Council's equipment and personnel matters. With the heavy workload, this Committee meets every month and twice monthly should this be required.

We have not invested in any new machinery this year but maintenance of existing equipment has been high. Having the additional area of Queen's Park to maintain has increased our workload and with the expectations of the Parishioner's being high we must strive to keep achieve a good standard.

The planning application reviews have continued to be plentiful and demanding a high level of attention. Our feedback to the planning authority is usually in accordance with their views and contributes a local dimension.

The Council's finances are reviewed every month and a high level of control has been achieved. There have been a few instances of Committee expenditure being granted in excess of the Committee's budget due to exceptional circumstances. The excess finance came from the Council's reserves. A financial statement is included in this report. In certain circumstances a Committee may request to carry over a balance to assist with an ongoing project.

The precept, this is the rate paid to the Council by the residents, has reluctantly been increased above the rate of inflation. We as a Council have restrictions upon us, have to provide a level of requirement to the village and to fulfil our plans requested for a 4.6 % increase, which in present money terms equates to £3.05 per year on a band C property. The Council tries to be very prudent with its financial planning, but with the village expansion so high and extra staff required, our commitment to provide the facilities needed for future years is high. We also have to maintain the level of reserves held by the Council for emergency should the need arise.

This Committee also manages the production of the Council's quarterly newsletter to all properties within the parish. This newsletter is intended to give parishioners a brief resume of Council activities and notification of future events.

This Committee also monitors the operation of the council web site. This continues to increase its use and recently been exceeding 2500 visits per month. This offers an important means of communication for the Council and the village.

The Future

The Village Plan that I referred to in last years report has been circulated. The response was not as good as we had hoped for, but we feel we have had sufficient returned and is now in the process of collating the information received to assess the aspirations of the Parish. The Parish Council, using the constraints we have will endeavour to work in these directions. It should be accepted however that any future project, large or small requires funding and with the present financial climate great consideration must be given before any project can be considered.

Financial Report

The expenditure of all Committee's was within the planned budgets. At the end of our financial year the Council was in a sound position and ended the year debt free.

Conclusion

I would like to thank our Councillors and staff as we've come to the end of a very eventful and successful year for Yaxley Parish Council. We have successfully completed the majority of our planned activities and discharged all our duties while remaining financially sound. The village is in a good condition, the Amenity Centre projects are ongoing and lettings have increased, the playing field facilities have been improved and are safer for the parishioners to use, the cemetery is in good condition and the Ferndale project now complete will offer a great facility to the village and its surrounding area.

Many of the Councillors, and especially the Committee persons have given a significant amount of their time to carry out the required work to attain the required result. Without these few and their dedication this council could not continue and I therefore personally thank them all.

Cllr. David Youles

12th May 2009

Chairman, Yaxley Parish Council