



## Chairman's report to the Yaxley Annual Parish Meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Welcome to Yaxley's annual Parish Meeting of the Electorate. This report has been compiled by the Chairs of each committee.

**Full Council** – Chairman Cllr Rodney Butcher and Vice Chair Cllr Mark Oliver.

It has been a very difficult year for everyone due to the coronavirus pandemic, little did we know when we held last year's Annual Parish Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March what the next twelve months had in store for us.

The Parish Council had to adapt the way it functioned very quickly; with meetings moving online, covid secure risk assessments for day to day working, as well as for the hire of any of the Council's facilities. Sanitisation stations were installed, and PPE sourced. I am very proud to say that during all the lockdowns the Parish Council staff have remained at work providing essential services for residents from emptying the public litter bins to maintaining public open spaces and the cemetery.

The support we would normally give local groups in the area to put on sporting sessions or provide the use of our facilities to run weekly meetings, had to stop. We do hope that as we come out of lockdown these sessions will be able to gradually start up again. We are pleased to say that small grants have continued to be awarded by the Council. Through these grants we have supported the Library reading challenge, Yaxley Countryside Trust, the Young People's Counselling Service, Gemma Hearts, Magpas Air Ambulance and Friends of Yaxley Infants School.

We were pleased to see that the zebra crossing on Broadway near to Mere View has been installed; however, we are disappointed with the problems that have arisen in relation to its location and the anti-skid surface used. The project was installed by Cambridgeshire County Council as part of the Local Highway Improvement Scheme and is being part funded by the Parish Council. We are pressing for the findings of a safety audit on the area and the outstanding issues to be addressed.

Up until the beginning of this year the Parish Council has had four vacancies but that is no longer the case as the new year has brought new faces with it. We are delighted that David Chapman, Aidan Knight, Alan Minns, Sheila Wayland and Denise Hitchcock have joined as Parish Councillors. Unfortunately, Deborah Paice has left the role of Councillor due to work commitments and I take this opportunity to thank Deborah and wish her the best for the future.

The biggest challenge which has faced Members has been adapting to Zoom Meetings and I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their patience and commitment. What appeared at first a daunting and strange routine has now become second nature and has enabled us to remain active and work effectively.

Recently our attention has been drawn to the issues of flooding along Main Street and the presence of Anglian Water vans at the pumping station on the Windsor Road junction. We are in talks with Anglian Water who have agreed to keep us fully informed of their detailed action plan as they are currently considering several interim and long term options including treatment options and measures to reduce flows.

Following concerns from residents regarding speeding in the village particularly along Broadway we are working alongside Cambridgeshire County Council as the Highways Authority and Cambridgeshire Constabulary to identify what long term speed reduction measures can be introduced.

Many of you will have seen the wonderful “Heroes” artwork on Recreation Ground Pavilion which features the image of the inspirational Captain Sir Tom Moore. This was commissioned in the summer and is a wonderful tribute to all who have played their part during the pandemic. This brings me nicely to all those unsung heroes out there that make the village such a wonderful place to live. The list is long and forgive me as I know I may miss someone out, but my thanks go to all the key workers, the local schools, local businesses, Yaxley Group Practise, pharmacies, the Social Echo North Huntingdonshire Hub, the Annabelle Davis Centre, Yaxley Foodbank, District and County Councils for what they have done throughout the pandemic and to all residents for they too have played their part in keeping us all safe.

**Personnel Committee** – Chairman Cllr Andrew Wood and Vice Chair Cllr Kevin Gulson

This committee meet quarterly dealing with matters relating to our work forces safety, training and development etc.

It has been a very active year within the Council with some very positive changes. Thank you to our Clerk, Helen Taylor, who has managed the changes, which have resulted in a well-structured, covid secure working environment during a difficult period. Although some members of the team have been able to work from home, the office has been manned throughout the pandemic to ensure that residents concerns and enquiries can be addressed promptly.

We have welcomed back Andy Wright as our Grounds Team Supervisor, Andy, slotted back in as if he had never left. Clark Sidaway has also joined us as a new Grounds worker bringing with him a lot of experience from his previous role with Bourne Town Council.

The beginning of lockdown last March was very challenging and thanks must go to Ray Allen and Michael Tesloff who ensured that the services provided by the Parish Council did not diminish. As lockdown eased in the Summer, Chris Chandler returned to the team on a temporary basis and certainly helped to ease the workload.

All through lockdown the grounds team have continued to cover a wide range of work for the village from grass cutting, emptying 70 bins twice weekly, play equipment safety inspections, sports pitch maintenance and line marking, upkeep of the cemetery and ongoing upkeep and redecorating of our buildings. Thank you to each one of them.

Helen’s team in the office continue to administer the needs of the Council. The Office Administrator, Michelle Darbon, has had the laborious task of sifting through the numerous government guidance to ensure that the Councils facilities are covid secure and measures are in place to enable them to be hired out. Both Michelle and Holly Fieldson, the Bookings Clerk, have worked tirelessly with football teams to ensure that they have covid risk assessment in place to enable them to play.

Beverley Porter continues to provide the council with accounting services, ensuring that Full Council and our related Committees are provided with the high standard of reporting that we have become accustomed to.

Beryl Maltby continues her many and varied duties within the Council, looking after the cleanliness of our halls and offices in addition to the varied support that she provides Helen and the team.

## **Community Facilities Committee** - Chairman Cllr Jayne Lusted and Vice Chair Cllr Gavin Needham

This committee meets up to seven times a year and has a wide range of responsibilities including cemeteries, street furniture, play areas, pitches, equipment and allotments.

August and September saw the busiest time ever known for the football pitches, after months of not being able to play a game all the teams were eager to have a match. Demand was high with the local Peterborough pitches remaining closed. The latest lockdown has seen the pitches being rested but the extremely high rainfall during December and January has left all the pitches waterlogged and we look forward to some drier weather so that their condition can improve with the return of grass roots football at the beginning of April.

Covid certainly caused everyone a number of issues and it has led to the delay in the skate park expansion. The main components of the ramps are manufactured in Manchester which went into lockdown long before the rest of the Country. Unfortunately, at this stage we are still unable to say when the work will start. However, we have started on our long-term goal to replace the rubber surfaces under the play equipment in the Recreation Ground. It is planned to replace one area every year starting with the swing tyre.

Other casualties of Covid have been the Middle Ground Coffee Club which was meeting every Monday in the Pavilion and the Repair Café which aimed to repair household electrical and mechanical devices that would otherwise be discarded. As soon as it is possible, we plan on restarting these projects.

One project that has been able to continue is the Community Fridge and by moving it to its new home in the Pavilion the redistribution of surplus food has continued. In order to be covid secure the way the fridge operated had to change and the food is now bagged by volunteers and handed out twice a week on a Wednesday and Friday morning. We have been very fortunate to see the number of volunteers helping at the Community Fridge increase, enabling the rota to be shared and the collection of the waste food doubled. Thank you to all involved, without their support the Fridge would not run as smoothly as it does. Over Christmas 200 kilos of food was distributed, averaging over 100 bags a week. We are still extremely grateful to Food for Nought for their weekly deliveries and to all the local suppliers who have kindly donated food including Produce World, the Central Co-op, Tesco's, M&S, Riverford Organic Farms, Waitrose, Barnack Distributions and Conquest Farm.

We continue to collaborate with local groups, such as Yaxley Community Allotment and Yaxley Countryside Volunteers. The new Community Orchard continues to grow and flourish and work has started on developing an adjacent wildlife area where nature will be allowed to take over. It is hoped that the tall grass will be a haven for insects and wildflowers.

## **Property Committee** - Chairman Cllr Mark Oliver and Vice Chair Gavin Needham

This Committee meets quarterly and is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of Yaxley Parish Council Buildings and the facilities within them.

It may have felt that time has stood still in the past 12 months, but the maintenance of the Council's facilities has certainly not. As part of the Council's energy efficiency measures all the lighting in the Austin Hall and adjoining toilets have been changed to LED and the single glazed windows in the stage area replaced with double glazed units. The Pavilion has had shutters placed on the windows and main entrance door to match the changing room doors installed last year. It is hoped that the railings around the building will at some point be taken down to make the building visually more appealing. The Owen Pooley has benefitted from new curtain rails.

In response to the findings of a fire risk assessment, a number of seals on the changing room doors at Queens Park have been replaced along with the installation of additional fire evacuation signs and new hinges to the fire doors off the Austin Hall.

The wet weather last year showed up an issue with the velux windows at Queens Park resulting in the need to replace the flashing kits on all eight windows which was completed in December.

### **Planning** - Chairman Paul Russell and Vice Chairman Mark Oliver

It has been quite a strange year – the committee not being able to meet at all – but has still reviewed over 60 planning applications by email, ranging from the Great Haddon development, through Eagle Business Park and larger individual developments, to single storey domestic extensions, ‘change-of-use’ applications and Tree Preservation Orders.

We strive to ensure all approved plans are in keeping with the needs of the village always bearing in mind a development’s neighbours and the effect on the village – visual impact; traffic concerns; avoidance of overdevelopment; and public safety.

Members of this committee also have to regularly attend District meetings – by Zoom currently - to put our case for rejection of a planning application (when necessary) – so we a very busy team of Councillors...!! We are not always able to get the result we want, but we keep trying.

### **Looking forward** -

The Councils action plan looking forward includes the expansion of the Skate Park, development of the recycling initiative in partnership with the waste minimisation group and the District Council and the extension of the cemetery.

And of course, continued financial restraint while maintaining key services delivered by the Parish Council.

Our biggest hope is that we can open our doors again to the various groups who use our facilities and everyone can enjoy once more each other’s company once more.

### **Review** -

While this is not a complete view of the services, we are responsible for and deliver, I hope it goes some way to demonstrating the wide range and extent of the works carried out by Yaxley Parish Council.

However, if you are interested to understand more of how or what we are doing, then you can go to our notice boards, web site, Facebook page or even pop along to one of our meetings where you can have up to 15 minutes to discuss items on the agenda or something you would like to bring up at a future meeting.

I’d like to thank all the Councillors for volunteering their time not only for Council meetings but for giving your time freely to help at the Community Fridge, assist with cemetery inspections, allotment inspections etc. Thank you to each of you.

My appreciation also goes to all our office, grounds and facilities personnel who work hard to maintain our buildings, land and village and who responded so positively to the unprecedented times we have just lived through.

Thank you all for attending, here’s looking forward to 2021/22 and all it brings.

Rodney Butcher

Chairman

Mark Oliver

Vice Chairman

