

Chairman's Report

As usual it's been a busy year for the Parish Council dealing with the many issues that faced us and continue to do so. The biggest issue facing the village at the moment being the proposed development of 135 houses on Colne Road.

Since we were last here, membership of the Parish Council has changed. Mrs Anne Parsons, Mr Mike Francis departed early last year and we thank them for all the help and support they gave the PC whilst on the council and wish them well. Next to move on was Mrs Margaret Lumb, the previous Chair of the PC. Margaret was involved in the PC for many years before becoming Chair in 2015 and achieved a lot for the village during her tenure. Margaret as you'd expect still does volunteer work for the PC and still represents the Village on Envar, Road Safety, Highways, Hanson and HCV and I would like to thank Margaret for the work that she still does for us. More recently Mr Alan Moules has decided to step down from the PC, Alans impact on the Village was his idea of and implementing the converting of the village phone Box into a small village Library. And hot off the press Mr Ian Shepherd has also decided to step down. Ian leaves behind a fantastic website, which he developed since joining the PC and he provided the support to the clerk in order to maintain this website.

With change comes new members, and we welcome Cllr Martin Crowhurst and Cllr Cynthia Curtis to the PC last year, both are very active members and bring a new perspective to the PC and finally Cllr Roger Steel joins us having been voted on very recently.

This year the PC has been very active in trying to keep the village and village hall tidy. June last year you may have seen all the Councillors out with strimmer's, hedge cutters etc., tidying all the hedges along the access road to the hall as well as weeding and cutting down the flower beds in front of the hall. We organised and ran a Village Litter pick, which did an excellent job and I thank every member of the public who helped with the pick. The hall foyer & meeting rooms have been redecorated and the roof blinds fixed and looks really tidy now.

The hall has been well maintained and well managed means we attract more bookings and events. A big thanks needs to go to our Clerk, Tracey Davidson for not only managing all the hall booking but pushing the hall as a great venue to members of the public to encourage people to book more events. This year we managed to hold the Precept of £92,827, and this was primarily achieved through the additional hall bookings that Tracey managed to find, offsetting the costs incurred to maintain the village that we are responsible for.

We did have some excellent events last year, all well attended and in most cases sold out. There was Craft and Christmas Fairs, Pop Quiz's and Pop-up restaurants as well as BaCstage and our own 'Ghosts of Mr Dickens' All raising money for the village.

Two other memorable events this year were the 'Advent Adventure'. Every day in December, all around the village a new window was revealed to show a Christmas scene, it was lovely walking around and seeing the work, imagination and effort that residents had gone to, but my favourite event was singing Christmas Carols, eating hot mince pies and watching the Christmas lights switched on at the Barograph, around the decorated Christmas Tree just before Christmas. For those that attended, it was a magic moment. Thank you Cllr Rob Gore for organising those.

The biggest change to our park this year was the construction and opening of the Village 'Outdoor Gym' and the new 'Play Park. The planning for this started over a year ago when our Clerk Tracey Davidson and Cllr Philippa Hope applied for funding through 'Tesco's Bag for Help Initiative' and 'WREN'. The funding applications was an intense piece of work by Tracey and Phil that resulted in £8000 from Tesco and a whopping £45,169 from WREN. We

added this funding to the Parish reserves and the CIL money that we had received over the past 18 months to allow us to push this through. The Park includes a Tango swing which is one of the first ones to be installed in the UK, with all the rest of the equipment, swinging, spinning and climbing selected to reflect the views of the school children at St Helens. Both these projects, the Gym and the playpark are a real legacy for the Village, thank you Tracey and Phil

Other improvements in the Village include the refurbished bus shelter, a bench sited on the barograph and a planter to the centre of the village. Thank you Feoffees for providing all these and Ed Cameron and his band of artists from St Helen's school for painting a mural depicting some of Bluntisham's history. These provide a lovely centre piece to Bluntisham.

The PC has been busy in pursuing actions from our Parish Plan, these included a school crossing on Colne Road, a One-way system for the high street, trying to get support for a 30mph on Station Road/Rectory Road, white lines along the Heath Road and a central refuge island on Station Road near the Garage. Despite our best efforts and multiple meetings most of the above were rejected for LHI funding as both the Highways Authority and the Police wouldn't support the applications. The good news is, the central refuge on Station Road near the Garage was approved and we are hope works will start on this soon.

Finally Planning, and Cllr Kathy Seale has been busy this year looking at planning applications and those that are about to come. Since May last year we have had 19 Planning applications ranging from simple garage lean-to's, extensions, floods lights all the way up to the change of use for the 'Prince of Wales' and of the 19 applications, 3 were rejected. We have also had 6 tree removal/polling applications too.

As we all know there are two large planning applications that are imminent, the 135 houses proposal by Bidwells on Colne Road and the 30 houses on Station Road by Steve Highland. As these potentially have an impact on our Village we have set up a bespoke planning committee, attended by 5 members of the PC as well as members from HDC and CCC, to ensure we give these applications the due diligence they deserve and you would expect from your Parish Council.

Our Allotments continue to be coveted, largely due to the steward ship of Cllr Frank Hudson, he does look after these tirelessly and they are a credit to his management.

Your Parish Council and is a great team, we have a great blend of new and old members, experienced and new, and without doubt all have the village at their heart and continue to do what we can, to maintain and improve our Village.

And on the back of that I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Rob, Cathy, Philippa, Martin, Cynthia, Tracey, Roger, Frank, Ian and Gary for their support, time and commitment over this last year, and I for one, am really looking forward to what we can all achieve this next year.

Mark Berg