

Chairman's Report 2021.

Mrs Gillian Taylor has been Parish Clerk since 1989, a truly brilliant help to all Councils and Councillors in all that time has decided to retire and enjoy her garden and grandchildren to the full.

I recently collected the first part of her 'Documents' in files and boxes, everything sorted and marked, the papers that have to sent in or out neatly filed in flimsies.

Planning documents box filed, old documents sorted for delivery to the Records Office in Northampton.

In all the time I have been Chairman, Gillian has made my job so much easier, always ready with help when I phone in a panic mode !

The Parish Council has continued to support and work for the community during this very difficult last year for all due to the Corona virus Covid - 19.

I would like to thank all Councillors and especially the Parish Clerk, Mrs Gillian Taylor for their continued support during the year.

Covid -19 certainly has brought all the community together to help, care and support each other.

A further thank you must be given to all NHS, Local Medical centre, Care, Council, Transport and local community groups staff.

Turning to the last year of Aston le Walls Parish, we have been holding all our meetings virtually via the Zoom platform and because of the everchanging situation decided to hold 2 addition meetings, in August and December.

The Precept, the money we receive to fund our expenses was raised this year to meet the further and future demands and rising costs.

I would urge all Parishioners to view the Aston le Walls PC website where we post all communications from Local Government, the Police and Fire Commissioner and support services. Along with our Meeting Minutes and Agendas.

During the last year there have been 4 Planning applications 3 in Appletree and 1 in Aston le Walls.

The Defibrillator that is mounted on the wall by the School entrance has been inspected and maintained by Councillor Hazelton who reports it to be in good working order, however the unit has a shelf life and will need to be replaced in the future. The Parish Council each year puts money aside to eventually pay for the renewal.

Although made aware of funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy ( formerly new homes bonus ), the Parish Council was unsuccessful in its application for funding for new LED street lights. The application forms ran to 18 pages and took some time to complete, so it was disappointing to be turned down, especially when via New Homes Bonus we had been successful.

There is a considerable cost saving to be made by the switch to LED, 2 street lights had failed and needed replacing, so the decision was made to upgrade these to LED and another 10 as well.

The only lights left to replace are the 5 on the Welsh Road.

The Council is contacted regarding a variety of issues, be it, fly tipping, pot holes, broken kerbs, blocked drains and signage. Sometimes directly or by posts on Facebook.

It would be far better to report direct to 'Street Doctor' a South Northants Council run website where the complaint can be uploaded directly with photos. There response time is pretty good.

We have had another winter without snow and not too much ice, therefore our 3 grit bins are mostly full for the second year running. 1 bin is owned and the contents paid for by Aston le Walls PC.

There has been one resident concern of a tree close to their property, Councillor Boston took measures to rectify the issue.

The Historic stones that have been beside the A361 since 1659 have been removed, partly as a safety measure, following the widening of the A361 and partly to avoid the Highways moving them. Many residents were concerned via Facebook of this, however the Stones are in the neighbouring Parish of Chipping Warden and their Council are considering a new location for them. On the same vein, there has been concern of the line of trees on the Airfield old runway, although a strong visual display for Aston le Walls, they are in Chipping Warden Parish, in this instance we have made representation to HS2 management the trees must remain.

About 40 metres have been removed as the line runs in that area, but all others should remain.

Fly tipping, mostly thrown by drivers, cans, food packaging, bottles etc is a continual problem on the local roads, there have been a few larger tips too, these have been reported to 'Street Doctor' and the SNC have removed them. Your Parish Council is thankful to those who litter pick as they walk.

Dog fouling and / or dog waste bags thrown in the hedgerows is still a nuisance and totally unacceptable.

The Vehicle Activated Sign is still put out periodically and the downloaded, date, time and speed info sent to the Police, who in turn send their Enforcement van to help us.

A361 Cross roads, as you all know this was a considerable saga, due to the first contractor going bust. Please be assured your council spent considerable time dealing with the various issues that arose, even though not in our Parish but it affected us more than Chipping Warden, together with CW PC we have made representation about the sign being so large it obscures part of the A361 when pulling out of Culworth Road East, rather like the bend in the hedgerow did before.

We continue to ensure all hedgerows are replanted and have voiced our concerns about the large flat grass areas on the approaches to the cross roads.  
HS2.

Your Council is continually in dialogue with Fusion ( x roads / CW Bypass and HS2 early works )with our concerns of not meeting their works requirements.

We are further in dialogue with Effiage Kier the contractor who will be building the track bed for HS2, as you will have seen and heard there is now major first stage works on the airfield and soon the Appletree Lane will be closed for 3 years.

Representatives of your PC attend the Liaison meetings held quarterly with all parties involved in HS2 and all other Parish Councils either at SNC Towcester or Virtually currently.

We have also attended and are active in a proposed ' Cycleway ', when HS2 is finally built and operational, their Haul route, that is to be built to Highways standard for all road registered vehicles will remain. This is considered to be an excellent cycle route going forwards, but there are many obstacles to overcome along the way.

Your Parish Council has been campaigning for speed reduction on the Welsh Road for over 15 years and a footpath from the village for as long. Until recent time met with the blinkered, there is no need as no major accident has occurred.

HS2 has a Road Safety Fund but it can only be accessed through what was NCC, now renamed West Northants Council as of April 1<sup>st</sup> 2021.

It was finally confirmed we have been successful, there will be 2 chicanes on the Welsh Road, 2 permanent VAS units, a footpath from Plowden Close to the village limit and a better Bus stop and drop curbs for the Children attending secondary schooling.

The Pocket Park mulching mower is 17 years old and struggling a bit. We have been trying to gain funding from Fusion for a replacement, it has been a year and many emails, but so far no funding, we may have to try another source.

Here is a list of the responsibilities that Council members take on, on your behalf outside of the Parish Council meetings.

Website, Trees, Footpaths, Defibrillator, Highways, Neighbourhood watch, Street lighting, Winter maintenance, Emergency Planning, Open spaces and HS2.

The Parish Council should have stood for re election in 2019, but due to the collapse of NCC and re organisation to Unitary Councils the Elections were cancelled until 2020, then Covid happened and the Elections were cancelled again.

This year 2021 a new Council will be formed 2 existing Councillors are not standing, Mr. Goffe Taylor and Mr Mark Hazelton. Goffe has been on the Council for many years and many as Chairman, his contributions to the Council and the village as a whole has been enormous and I for one will miss his local knowledge and can be done attitude.

Mark has been on the Council a shorter time, but has helped us considerably with his Computer and Internet skills. During his time we have had to set up a PC website and meet all the criteria of being a .gov given that most correspondence is now via email this help was vital.

Ensured all Councillors had Councillor@ email rather than using their private ones and as previously mentioned looked after the Defibrillator.

I wish them both well with their own endeavours going forwards.

Charles Lees

Chairman Aston le Walls PC 2021