

## Chairman's Report.

Every year when I come to write the report I think there can't be much to write.

Then I read the Minutes for each month and discover how wrong I am.

In the May Election last year 2 Councillors did not stand for re election, Goffe Taylor and Mark Hazleton, we were fortunate 2 other residents came forward.

Matt Hawkins and Grahame Barnes, there being no others we had an uncontested election.

Matt and Grahame were welcomed to the Council and have been a great asset.

I would further like to thank all other Councillors for their help and commitment this year.

Councillor Julie Challenor took on the role of Parish Clerk too, a role she has developed during the year. Gillian Taylor our retiring Clerk it has to be said after 30 years in the role deserved a rest.

We have moved from cheque payment to online banking, two Councillors still need to approve payments.

During the year we finished converting our street lights to LED and saw a significant drop in the cost of lighting them, with the ongoing electricity price rises, this will now be even more important.

Following a request we fitted cowls to just two lights.

We awarded our mowing contract for the year to a new contractor, after an initial good service, in June he stopped. We were very grateful to Richard Burrows a resident for taking over the contract for the rest of the year.

I think it is important to thank Toby Hawkins for his efforts all year long in litter picking the village as part of his Duke of Edinburgh Award.

A new Memorial bench was installed by the School fence on Main Street, with the cost be met by Buckingham Group, the contractor building the Chipping Warden relief road and the A361 cross roads.

The bench was unveiled at a small gathering ( Covid restrictions being observed) by former Parish Chair and lifetime resident Goffe Taylor the instigator of the need for a bench to Commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of World War 2

The Millennium garden has been given a minor makeover by Councillors with the removal of a lot of overgrowth and a hard cut back. Toby Hawkins also helped with weed removal to the steps. Richard Burrows finally got the grass under control.

The Pocket Park has had a busy year, a full report being given later.

When our insurance came up for renewal our then current provider offered poor terms. The Clerk sourced alternative suppliers and our new provider is very competitive, to gain a bigger discount we signed up for 3 years. I can confirm the Defibrillator and all the Streetlights are covered by the policy.

Concerns have been raised during the year that some trees within the village could be dangerous, your Council has asked for help from WNC and an Arborist to determine whether any are a risk.

The conclusion was that all trees are secure and safe, but will require cutback within the next 5 or so years. I would like to thank Tom Boston for his help in all tree matters and Andrew Taylor for cutting back the hedge on Blacksmiths Lane.

We have to consider our Precept for the year in January ( money for services supplied through taxation), Your Council through good management decided no increase in the precept would be requested for the year 2022/23.

During the course of the year we are asked to contribute towards forward planning and answer various surveys.

Asset Mapping Programme ( AMP) has been one such survey, we were asked to supply a list of all Assets within the whole Parish, that includes Appletree too that are supply by or owned by WNC.

2 Councillors and the Clerk have spent many hours providing the information, having to deal with an input online service, not fit for purpose. Why did we do it, partly to help with future planning, but also because the Parish Council would receive £223, although there now appears to be constriction on how it is spent !

Your Council is very grateful of the help provided by our new District Councillor Alison Eastwood here present and Mel Carter of the local Policing Team at Brackley.

Mel earlier this year held a Surgery here in the village hall so residents could come and ask questions of the local policing, a service of great help. It is further good to see a better presence overall in the communities of South Northants by the Police.

Your parish Council has been asked to put forward a person to be the Police Liaison Representative for the village. All Councillors felt they did not have the extra time to take on this role. Although a notice was placed on the Parish and Village website, village notice board and Newsletter, no one came forward to accept this role.

I have discovered since, the Chairman and Clerk fill this role anyway, so we'll just carry on as before.

We have fought long and hard for the Welsh Road speeding to be reduce and finally this year with funding from the HS2 Road Safety Fund the chicanes have been constructed, we are still waiting for completion with 2 vehicle activated signs and further layout improvements.

Our existing VAS unit shows the reduction in speed is working.

During the year Fusion early works contractor for HS2 provided a new mower for the Pocket Park, so much lighter and easier to use than the old Hayter bought in 2006 !

Finally I turn to HS2.

They have been hard work for your Council.

They closed the Appletree Lane in April, clearly a hard closure was required not just some cones. It took some time to get that sorted at the same time they littered the village with signs, even one on Butlers Close say no HS2 traffic.

Why one wondered, it is a Cul de sac.

Again we walked the course and got the unnecessary signs removed.

It took months and many emails to finally stop HS2 traffic coming into the village. We acknowledge the need for the Security team to check their exiting signs and hard closure point.

The concrete track, our footpath round robin route for the village again was difficult to get implemented to be safe for all users.

Any HS2 updates and or local road closures are posted on the website and village Facebook page.

It is hoped their Site Access Road will be completed soon May / June and then all HS2 traffic, cars, vans, pick ups, tractors, trucks, earth moving equipment should not be using the Welsh Road.

We continue to monitor the situation.

Thank you.

Charles Lees

Chairman Aston le Walls PC