

Chair of Harringworth Parish Council: Annual Report to Parish Meeting – 2021/22

Over the last year the Parish Council held 6 meetings and spent many hours in discussion to ensure that we act in the best interests of all our villagers. I continue to be most grateful for this effort by our parish councillors, who carry out their duty diligently without reward or thanks. In particular, I thank our new Clerk for taking on the role from the 1st August; without her support we would struggle to operate effectively. Unfortunately, our bank continued to reach new levels of incompetence requiring the Clerk to spend many hours trying to deal with what should have been straightforward matters. To rub salt in the wound they then informed us that we would have to pay a monthly charge for their abysmal service. I am pleased to report that we have now changed banks and whilst we now pay a modest charge, we will at last be able to deal on-line with our banking yet still retain two-person authorisation of all payments.

During the past year we have dealt with 15 planning applications, a reduction over previous years no doubt due in part to COVID restrictions. As we live in a conservation area planning applications are not as straightforward as would otherwise be the case but in the majority of cases we do not raise objections to planning applications.

Following a competitive tendering process, the grass cutting contract has been renewed with Leicestershire Gardens, albeit at increased cost. This coupled with other cost increases resulted in the precept being raised by 5% for this financial year.

Following last year's annual meeting the Parish Council have been pushing NNC Highways to carry out speed monitoring in the village, specifically on Deene Road as it approaches the centre of the village. Speed monitoring took place between 4th-11th December but by Viaduct Cottage on Gretton Road not at the bottom of Deene Road. The results recorded 4000 movements with 85% within the speed limit. Highways will return later this year to carry out monitoring where originally requested. In addition, Highways have agreed to repaint the give way markings at the bottom of Deene Road and erect a Give Way sign.

Blasting at Wakerley Quarry has increased over the past few months and together with the chairs of Barrowden, Wakerley and Laxton Parish Councils/Meetings I have been pushing NNC to insist that Mick George Ltd comply with their planning restrictions regarding blasting. I am pleased to report that finally the company are now complying with the restrictions and via the "Telegram" App provide 24 hours notice of blasting.

Other activity by the Parish Council include:

- The footpath in the churchyard and into the new burial ground has been improved and extended.
- Blocked drains, and in particular the ones up Deene Road and on Wakerley Road, up the hill from Shotley, have all been cleared out.
- The hedge that runs beside Seaton Road up to the County boundary has recently been cut back, significantly improving road visibility and improving safety.
- Street poppies were purchased and erected for Remembrance. The Parish Council will purchase a few more for next year. In addition, a Tommy Figure will be placed on the green in-front of the Church gates for the duration of the Remembrance period.
- The Burial Fees have been reviewed with no increase for 2022/3.

- To mark Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee the green beside the entrance to the Stables is being renovated by a volunteer working party under the lead of Councillor Walsh. My thanks go to the gardening group who have offered to maintain a planter on the green and to Mr & Mrs Riley for their kind donation of the planter. When complete I hope the green will be a fitting tribute to Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee.
- Consideration is being given to the placement of a flagpole, either on the Green in front of the Church gates or just inside the Church gates on the right-hand side. Flags are a very British way of expressing joy and pride – they are emotive symbols which can boost local and national identities, strengthen community cohesion and mark civic pride. Currently we are waiting pre- planning application advice from NNC planning department on whether this project is feasible. Should this prove positive then the next step will be to carry out a survey of all villagers to assess whether this project is supported.

The state of our roads and pavements continues to be an issue but given NNC spending constraints it is likely that only emergency repairs will be carried out. We will continue to maintain pressure on NNC to address these concerns. It is important that villagers continue to report all highway maintenance issues direct via "Street Doctor".

And finally, a thanks to all the parish councillors who freely give up considerable time for the benefit of all the village.

Andrew White CB DL

Chair Harringworth Parish Council

12th April 2022