

Chair of Harringworth Parish Council: Annual Report to Parish Meeting – 2023/24

The Parish Council (PC) held six scheduled meetings with two additional extraordinary meetings. Routine business includes finance, planning applications, approving contract payments. Most of our time is dedicated to various topics of interests that occur during the year.

Over the last 12 months the PC have deliberated on a number of planning applications and applications relating to tree work. It is worth noting that whilst the Parish Council has a right to be consulted on such matters, we do not have the power to refuse, or approve an application. That legal duty rests with our Unitary Authority, North Northants Council (NNC).

In the last year we:

- Negotiated a new electricity supply contract following the withdrawal of “deemed supply” i.e. unmetered supply contracts, by all the main electricity supply companies. The result was over a 100% increase in our electricity costs.
- Arranged for the faded 30mph signs to be replaced.
- With the assistance of Highways had advisory 20mph signs erected in the village. In addition, the 30mph sign, on Seaton Road entering the village, has been moved further away from the village and a new advisory 20mph sign erected closer to the village.
- Sought the emergency clearance of some drains during the recent period of extremely high rainfall.
- Contracted for some overhanging branches in the Churchyard to be trimmed. Purchased and laid gravel on the Churchyard path.
- With the continued support of the landowner the hedge that runs beside Seaton Road up to the County boundary will be trimmed once the ground is sufficiently dry.
- Continue to erect both the street poppies and Tommy figure during the Remembrance period.
- Petitioned NNC Highways to permit shrubs to be placed by Jubilee Green (by the entrance to the Stables) to protect the verge. Regrettably, Highways rejected our application.
- Allocated a dedicated email address to each councillor and the Clerk to ensure compliance with data protection and best practice.
- All document storage moved to electronic, providing a quick and secure method to access past documents and correspondence.

I suspect that the state of our roads remains a significant concern to all. The Clerk continues to raise the poor state of the roads and verges with NNC Highways. I recently attended a meeting with the head of NNC Highways and Keir, their contractor, to discuss the challenges they face. The unprecedented winter rainfall has resulted in only urgent potholes being repaired within 7 days, with the rest scheduled for repair within 26 weeks. It is incumbent on us all to report any defects, ideally via the “fix my street” web site – If it is not reported then nothing will be done. Of particular concern are the verges on Seaton Road, a meeting with Keir is scheduled to discuss what might be done in the short term to improve the situation.

Our finances are in good order despite the shock increase in electricity prices. Once again, the Parish Council has limited this year’s rise in the precept to just 3%, increasing the precept to £6884.

Our local elections are due in May 2025 when NNC and Parish councillors are elected. Thus, this may be my last report to the annual Village Open Meeting. All seven parish council seats will be up for election and parishioners are encouraged to consider standing for election. Our democracy relies on people putting themselves forward to serve their local community and I urge you to consider doing so when the time comes.

In the meantime, I thank my fellow councillors and our Clerk for their time and support during the last year. We are but a small group with limited powers but please do let us know if you have a suggestion for the betterment of our beautiful village.

Andrew White
Chair Harringworth Parish Council
15th April 2024