

HORTON PARISH COUNCIL - ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2015.

I should start this report by saying what a difference a year makes! This time last year we had just started the recovery process after the flooding of January and February 2014, a year on, after a mild winter the daffodils are out and we are moving into spring. During the past year a great deal of discussion has taken place between the statutory agencies, those that were directly affected by the flooding and the volunteers who came forward to provide help and support in many different ways.

I think it is safe to say that lessons have been learnt, procedures improved so that, should we face the same situation again, everybody will, hopefully, be better prepared.

In the last few weeks the EA have published proposals for three new flood relief channels on the River Thames between Datchet and Teddington. The 1st to be undertaken is between Datchet and Hythe End. The route following the railway line from Datchet to Wraysbury Station (on the Horton side) then across the lakes to Hythe End. Bridging the railway twice, Welley Road and Staines Road Wraysbury. More details will be available as the project moves towards the planning stage and the actual construction logistics are submitted. We have copies of the map showing the proposed channels which will be available at the close of the meeting.

The Council met 10 times during the year and commented on all full planning applications. Due to a change in national planning policy the Council are no longer consulted on 'minor' applications that fall within the criteria of permitted development. This type of small extension or outbuilding requires a legal determination which can only be made by Planning Officers.

The development of a Neighbourhood Plan in partnership with Wraysbury Parish Council continues. Residents have expressed their views through an online questionnaire and public displays. A draft planning framework is currently being drafted with the support of Planning Aid.

Running ahead of the Neighbourhood Plan is the Royal Borough's Local Plan. The Royal Borough have just released their 2nd preferred options paper which confirms no developments sites have been identified within Horton and the edge of settlement sites proposed within Wraysbury have been rejected.

The Council has responded to a number of national consultations and statutory instructions during the year. These range from submitting a robust objection to the Heathrow Hub proposal and support for a 2nd runway at Gatwick, to updating and changing parish policies or standing orders to meet new requirements. We are currently working on a new design of the defunct parish web site to comply with new transparency rules.

Community involvement, enhancement and improvement remain one of our major objectives. The Council continued its commitment to provide ongoing financial support to Champney Hall, contributing to the upkeep of the Church Clock and undertaking additional grass cutting to highway verges.

This year we also financially assisted the community by contributing to the upkeep of the Church Yard by contracting additional groundwork, the very welcomed upgrading of the heating in Champney Hall, provision of winter hanging baskets on the Stanwell Road and with the support of a volunteer working party refreshed the daffodil bulbs on road verges.

A number of resident dog owners have also played a part in reducing the mess left through irresponsible dog ownership, by monitoring pathways and the Arthur Jacob Nature Reserve, handing out waste collection bags to offenders.

Remembrance Sunday, the Christmas tree lighting and carol service remain well received and attended.

It would be appropriate at this point to thank all who have assisted, volunteer bulb planters and dog walkers, Mrs. Marlow for Remembrance Sunday arrangement, J. Rayner and Sons Ltd, Rev. C. Gibson for the Christmas celebrations and Councillor Mrs. Coogan who is out in all weathers keeping the village centre free from litter.

Section 106 funding has allowed us to provide additional play equipment within the Recreation Ground, this equipment providing new challenges for all age groups.

During the past year in conjunction with youth services a six week trial of weekly activities was offered to young people aged 8 to 14 but, unfortunately attendance was disappointing so the project was discontinued.

Recognising that there is a need for youth provision, funded from grants already received, activity days are been arranged for the forthcoming Easter and Summers School Holidays.

As a Council we are very grateful for the continued support of our Ward Councillors J. Lenton and C Rayner. Much has been achieved, replacement of old rusting fencing on the Horton Road , new fencing and verge protection bollards on Coppermill, Stanwell and Datchet Roads.

Road safety improvements through the provision of a roundabout at the junction of Coppermill and Stanwell Roads have been positively received by both residents and road users.

They have both taken concerns raised at our meetings by members of the public forward, to the appropriate officer, agency or company.

Residents have raised safety concerns relating to footway parking at Milton Close, a meeting is currently being facilitated between parish and ward Councillors, highway officers and the housing association to try and find a solution.

Following a suggestion from Councillor Tillyer, the Council is considering applying for planting licence for the verge in front of the Recreation Ground to provide a 'green' visual enhancement and deter parking. At the March meeting this was incorporate into a larger planting scheme that may incorporate other road verges and the village green As the RBWM have recently planted a number of new trees around the village, an approach is being made through the RBWM Tree Officer requesting that they give consideration to include these additional areas within their planting programme.

The statutory duties of the Council continue, we have co-opted and welcomed Mr. David Roberts to the Council, said goodbye, with best wishes to the Minuting Clerk Mr. Michael Kiely who has accepted a second full Clerkship at Hurley. Mrs. Marlow has accepted the addition duties and her appointment as the Proper Officer is confirm till April 2016.

Financially in these austere times we have kept a firm hand on the budget which has allowed the Council to underwrite the 2015/16 budget by £1.500 keeping the 2015/16 precept increase to a minimum.

Our end of year accounts, financial statements, internal controls and risk assessment received a un-qualified (no concerns) opinion from the internal and external auditor

We are currently investigating external funding streams that may be open for community enhancement projects. Unfortunately, being a statutory body, we are excluded from many, but possible options for partnership projects with a third sector organisation are being followed up.

Legislation continues to be updated with 'openness and transparency' being at the core. At actual time, the content of meetings, can now be recorded, filmed tweeted, blogged or instantly communicated to others.

The Royal Borough have refreshed their Big Society Devolved Services offer that would allow parishes to take on addition duties, ranging from determination of small planning applications to minor road repairs.

We continue under a SLA to undertake urban and rural grass cutting of highway verges but as a small council, decided that we do not have the capacity to accept other duties.

As we move towards the end of the municipal year and our current term of office, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors and the Clerk for their support and positive contributions. The Council at the last meeting recorded their thanks and best wishes to Councillor Hall, as he has now moved out of the village and will be leaving the Council at the end of April. Team work is all about listening too and openly debating different views or ideas. We have achieved that, with very positive results, which have enhanced the village in which we all live or work.

Thank you. Councillor F. Bovingdon 2014/15 Chairman Horton Parish Council.

