

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 30th May 2006

May I start by welcoming everyone here this evening?

This report aims to give you all a summary of what has happened in the village this year and what your Parish Council has been doing. We've had a pretty busy year this year, not only have we had 12 meetings, but for the first in many councillors' memories we've also had an Extraordinary General Meeting, along with numerous other sub-committee meetings.

We are saying goodbye to some councillors who stood down at the recent election; these being Gordon Dawson, Richard Vanbergen and Betty Dix. I would like to especially thank Betty Dix who took over from her husband as a Parish Councillor 18 years ago and spent many years as chairperson. I would also like to welcome our new councillors; Lynne Hathaway and Paul Watson who join us this month as well as Judith Aylott who joined us in September of last year.

We continue with 2 major initiatives this year, The Youth Group and The Parish Plan.

Youth Group

The youth group has definitely been a great success with the lower ages and to a lesser extent with the target age range.

The senior group and the junior group both meet regularly. Earlier this year the junior group gave something back to the community by making signs warning motorists of ducks in the road.

Liz Adams and Judith Aylott have visited a multi play facility in Earith and it is hoped to get one for the village, which would supply further recreational facilities. Unfortunately efforts to find a suitable location have been unsuccessful so far.

Not everything goes quite as well as planned though; The Youth Group has been repeatedly let down by CCC and they have experienced problems with the availability of permanent youth workers in the village. It is only the continued support of the Detached Youth Team and the dedication of the Youth Group committee that has kept things going.

Parish Plan

This year the Parish Plan Steering Group finished their work. Over the summer the final questionnaires were delivered to every household and when completed were collected via big red boxes throughout the village over the next month.

142 households responded to the questionnaire. Some thought this was disappointing and showed an apathetic attitude towards the village. However, at 22 % of the population, this is actually slightly above average for this kind of project.

The final written document is now being thoroughly processed by the Parish Council and the initial Draft Response is available tonight.

As a result of the Parish Plan, the Parish Council knows that the village as a whole do not want to lose their shop and Post Office, and we can focus our efforts on retaining the

provision of these facilities.

The Parish Plan also revealed, to nobody's surprise, concern over speeding and parking and their subsequent effects on pedestrian safety. I am pleased to say we have been successful in a bid for the Jointly Funded Minor Improvement Scheme for speed reduction measures along The Great North Road. We have also managed to get approval to extend the footpath either side of the footbridge on the village green to allow safer crossing of Mill Road and The High Street.

Before the Parish Plan results were known we had applied to the "Safer routes to School" scheme and secured funding to supply bicycle sheds to encourage cycling to school. Unfortunately the scheme ran out of money before we could get any other measures implemented.

We have also continued to support local organisations in the village, in whose development the Parish Council were intimately involved.

Old Memorial Hall

After the sale of the Old Memorial Hall last year, all that remained was to wrap up the old memorial hall charity and transfer the remaining funds to the New Memorial Hall. This was begun in August and the Old Memorial Hall charity was removed from the central register of charities in October.

New Memorial Hall

Over the course of the year Richard Vanbergen and Dave Senior were our 2 representatives on the New Memorial Hall Committee.

Alconbury Sports and Social Club

Gordon Dawson and Liz Adams have been our representatives with the Alconbury Sports and Social Club this year. We have decided to maintain our pledge of match funding to the club to support their grant from the Football Foundation. We are still waiting a decision from the Football Foundation and Wren.

Flood Alleviation

Not much to report since we were told at our last AGM that Environment Agency funding had been reduced. The Environment Agency are still expecting to deliver their documentation to the District Council by August this year which will be followed by a planning application. The Parish Council will continue to monitor this situation.

Village Precept

One thing highlighted in the Parish Plan was that a large number of residents were unwilling to see an increase in the Council Tax precept for the village. The Parish Council will take this on board in future budget meetings.

The Parish Council has primarily increased the precept to continue funding the Youth group and to allow the Minor Improvements Scheme to progress.

Unfortunately the quotes for grass cutting this season have doubled from our original supplier so the extra cost will have to be met from our meagre reserves.

Although there has been an increase, the Parish Council's precept is still much lower per

head than many of the parishes in the district.

Planning

The parish council have had few particularly controversial planning applications this year. Some residents are under the impression that it is the Parish Council that makes decisions on planning applications, this is not the case. It is in fact Huntingdon District Council. The Parish Council simply makes their recommendations to HDC, and these are not always listened to. However, thanks to the Parish Plan the Parish Council now have a mandate to more legitimately represent the views of the entire community with regards to planning matters.

Despite continued letters to the local press from Peterborough city council, who would love Alconbury to be an airport, there has in fact been no movement on any planning matters with regard to the airfield, apart from continued use of facilities such as fireworks storage and police dog training.

Bus Shelter

There has been much discussion surrounding what should happen to the brick bus shelter on the High Street. Although in September the Parish Council agreed, in principle, to replace the bus shelter it was later decided that the costs were prohibitive and the value for money represented by this for the benefit of the greater community were minimal. There was also no guarantee that removal of the bus shelter would solve the anti-social behaviour problems.

Further options were investigated, such as improved lighting, but although HDC would have met at least some of the more expensive costs of replacing the shelter, they were unwilling to make any contribution to its lighting.

I mentioned earlier that the first extraordinary general meeting in Councillors' memories had been called. The Parish Council discovered that an un-advertised CCTV camera had been installed opposite the bus shelter and were astounded to learn that this had deliberately been kept from us, the democratically elected representatives of the village. We are yet to receive a satisfactory explanation as to how and why this occurred.

In conclusion, along with the more exciting aspects of Parish Council business, there are also the more mundane but equally important tasks of keeping the village in good order. I would like to thank our Clerk, Sue Lancey and all the Parish Councillors who continually work towards this aim.

Thank you for listening.