

### **APM 2021. 3 – Annual Report from the Chairman**

#### **Alconbury Parish Council Annual Report:**

What a year it's been! Despite the challenges of the global pandemic Alconbury Parish Council has continued to meet via Zoom to ensure village matters are discussed and progressed as appropriate.

Following the horrible flooding before and after Christmas, Alconbury and Alconbury Weston Parish Councils have been working in tandem to tackle the underlying issues. "The Alconburys Flood Group" (TAFG) has been liaising with the Environment Agency and the other agencies involved (for example HDC and CCC) and has produced several potential and viable solutions under the banner of "Prepare, Prevent, Protect". TAFG is well advanced with the process of gathering the detailed data and proposals to pursue with these agencies including both short term and long term solutions. The impacts from the different proposals on reducing flood risk also vary but TAFG are determined to push these with vigour

Both Parish Councils have also initiated a Community Governance Review with a view to operating as a single Parish Council. Both parishes share local amenities and therefore each has an interest in these. Details of Terms of Reference (ToR) have been issued and are available on both Parish websites and on the noticeboard outside the shop. All parishioners are invited to comment on this proposal and the ToR.

Remodelling of Crown Gardens has been completed and was handed over to Chorus Homes for day to day management of the facilities in partnership with Huntingdonshire District Council on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2021. It will provide temporary accommodation to single persons and families. Occupancy will be staggered during April and May 2021. They listened to our community feedback and agreed to provide onsite security, every night; from 9pm to 6pm (7 days a week, including public holidays).

Closure of the 'old' A14 between Huntingdon (Spittals) and Godmanchester continues to impact village life with regards to significant and frequent HGV use of the B1043 causing increased noise and disruption to the residents of Lordsway. Our county councillor, Ian Gardener, continues to press Highways England to install signage to redirect traffic for Alconbury Weald (from the Brampton hut interchange along the A141 (formally the A14) to Spittals interchange and then northwards on the A1307 (formally the A1 to A14 link)) and avoid the B1043. Unfortunately signage does not have/has not had the significant impact on driver behaviour we had hoped for. We are therefore investigating if a weight limit can be assigned to this road.

We are currently considering several Local Highways Initiatives:

- Installation of a weight limit on B1043
- Speed indicator and monitoring device
- Installation of a bridleway/footpath to join the newly installed one alongside the A1 with the village

We are exploring the feasibility and interest in our community developing a 'Neighbourhood Plan'. This would be overseen by the Parish Council but developed by an independent community group. It would give us as a community direct power to develop a shared vision for our neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of our local area and the associated infrastructure. It provides a powerful set of tools for local people to plan for the types of development to meet their community's needs and where the ambition of the neighbourhood is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.

Unfortunately, our vice-chair resigned in February 2021, Steve Tarabella. Thanks for his dedication over the years particularly for his expertise and passion for all things trees!

Finally, I'd like to end by thanking all of the councillors and our Parish Clerk for their continued support and hard work through the year. I'm particularly proud that we have continued to deliver on all of our promises that we made in last year's Annual report and much more on top. I know that we will continue through the next year to make improvements and represent the best interests of our village.

We currently have four vacancies.

If you're interested in village matters and would like to be involved in any of our upcoming activities please contact either the parish clerk or myself.

#### **APM2021.4 - Annual Report from the Responsible Financial Officer**

The Parish Council started the financial year with £50,334.78 in the reserves and with careful management and an annual spend of £32,747.99 we were able to carry forward £54,250.07 at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. Parish Councils should keep between 1 and 2 times their annual precept in reserves. Alconbury Parish Council are within that bracket and remains financially stable going forwards.

By making savings and applying pressure on the District Council and County Council to carry out maintenance that they were responsible for, the Parish Council has been able to keep to the reduced level of Precept by of £30000.

The Parish Council has continued to be successful in taking over the Village grass cutting of the areas usually cut by Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) and Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC). The contractor will carry out cuts to the areas between April and October. The Parish Council has been able to claim the costs back from HDC and CCC so far with the Parish Council making up the shortfall.

The Parish Council decided to change bankers last year, and move to online banking. This method has worked very well and remains a robust and secure way of banking. It allows the Clerk to administrate the account and 2 members to authorise the payments, enabling suppliers and staff to be paid on time.

With the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus and the country going in to lockdown from the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 many staff from the District and County Council had been redeployed elsewhere to ensure our communities are being looked after. Some areas of the village footpaths and highways continue to have their issues and the Clerk will continue to report these issues to the relevant authority.

We have fulfilled all of our obligations and have been able to make donations to Alconbury Sports and Social Club and the Alconbury Recreation Field Charity. A small donation was made to the Royal British Legion for a Remembrance Day poppy wreath and the Council has been able to financially assist the Allotment Association to carry out repairs to the perimeter fencing.

## **APM 2021 5 and 6 – Annual report from the District and County Council Councillor Mr. I. Gardener**

### **Alconbury Annual Parish Council Meeting – May 2021**

The outcome of the County Council Elections held on 6<sup>th</sup> May 21 was Conservatives 28 seats, Lib Dem 20 seats, Labour 9 seats and Independents 4 seats As a result the council has gone into No Overall Control. Which has led the Lib Dems, Labour and Independents to form a pact to run the Council, which as I understand it lasts for two years with reviews every 6 months.

In the Alconbury and Kimbolton division I was returned with 67.9 % of the vote and a majority of 1874. Which was very humbling, to know that I had received such a large vote of support from the electorate of the division. My thanks go to opponents for the spirit in which they conducted the election. I look forward to working with everyone over the next four years for the benefit the residents and businesses of the division

One of the Pacts early decisions was to abolish the Health Committee, which is somewhat strange when it along with the Communities committee has been driving the County Councils work on the Covid 19 pandemic. They have also agreed that Committee meetings and Full Council will only meet Quarterly, which is preventing member input into decisions. The first major consequences of this decision is that there will be no County Council member input into the East West Rail consultation as the first meeting of the committee will be after the deadline for submission of views. It also means that formal approval for the LHI Bids at the panel meetings will be delayed, along with the long awaited meeting with Highways England to discuss the unintended consequences of the A14/A1 upgrade and the impact on Alconbury has also been delayed.

Sadly the year 20/21 has been the year of the Covid 19 pandemic which has changed all our lives in so many ways. The County Council along with Peterborough City Council set up the countywide Hub to coordinate the response to the pandemic, which saw the redeployment of 420 staff

Throughout the last year the Hub has provided regular support to 7800+ clinically vulnerable people, including 31,700+ check in emails, 8480 + check in texts and 15,200+ check in calls.

Worked closely with the British Red Cross to provide 3,590 food parcels. Responded to 19, 433 requests for support, which involved providing practical support, signposting or by offering advice and guidance.

Supported 32000 children and young people with access to food over the Christmas break, through the Winter Support Grant Scheme

Helped 46 people to self-isolate where the national scheme was unable to assist

Assisted 3940+ households in providing information and support, as well as offering warm clothes, utilities and hygiene supplies and provide 23 people with access to transport for vaccination appointments, who would otherwise been unable to attend.

The County Council has not held any in person Council meetings for a year, they have all been virtual meetings which have been a challenge in many ways.

The Combined Authority is setting up a Demand Responsive Transport Trial Scheme for West Huntingdonshire, serving St Neots & Huntingdon, as it is now the Authority in charge of Buses. This however may change with the new Mayor.

DRT is a totally flexible service, so it does not have to stick to a specific timetable or route. Using either an App or a phone call to the travel hub customers will be able to book a journey from a location of their choice. The technology will tell passengers where to wait at their virtual bus stop for

pick up and drop off points. This makes it the perfect solution in Rural Areas where a normal bus service would struggle to reach the necessary passenger numbers to remain viable.

The A428 dualling between the Black Cat Roundabout and the Caxton Gibbet is to go ahead

East West Rail has moved to its next stage of consultation the info can be found at <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation> Which will run from the 31 March to 9 June 2021. The two favoured options involve a station north of Cambourne and the A428, with the line entering Cambridge through a new station Cambridge South near Addenbrookes and Bio Campus.

From Bedford to a new St Neots South Station, which would be located to the south of Little Barford. The line will run from Bedford to the south of Clapham and the north of Ravensden, & Wilden villages before crossing just north of the Black Cat Roundabout and onto the new St Neots South Station. Between the new St Neots South station and the new Cambourne Station the route would follow to the north of the new A428 between the Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet

The County Council has filled 63,666 potholes in the year 2019/20 which is up from 58,300 potholes in 2018/19. Implemented a Vision Zero Road Safety partnership strategy to reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries across the County.

I will continue to support Parish Council bids on behalf of their local community for Local Highways Improvement Grants. I will be arranging a meeting with the Engineers for LHI bids in the near future so that the PC can put forward its proposals for this year's LHI, to enable the PC to determine which is likely to be successful.

I will work with the Alconbury Flood Group to look at and achieve measures to mitigate flooding in the village.

The District Council has confirmed that a f £12.8 million investment will be made into the District's largest market town, St Neots which is made up of £5.9 million from the District Council, £3.1 million from the Combined Authority and £3.8 million from the Governments Future High street Fund, this will see the regeneration of the Old Falcon Inn, Redevelopment of the Priory Centre/Quarter, Improvements to the Market Square, High Street and the St Neots Bridge along with a new waterfront route.

The acoustic fence under the B1043 viaduct should be constructed in the next few months, which will hopefully mitigate the sounds coming from the viaduct. I will continue to work to see if HGV traffic can be directed away from the B1043. We are in discussions with Urban & Civic with regard to an HGV covenant for the Alconbury weald site, to get HGV traffic to use the A141 and then the A1307 from the Brampton Hut Roundabout rather than the A1 & B1043.

Going forward I am to sit on the County Councils Environment & Green Investment, Planning and Pension Committees as well as the Fire Authority

On the District Council I will sit on the Customers & Partnerships Scrutiny Panel, which is reporting on the flooding in the District, as well as the Development Management Committee and the Section 106 Agreement Advisory Group and the Appeals Sub Group.

If you have any questions or queries please do not hesitate to contact me

Kind regards

Ian

Cllr Ian Gardener

County Councillor for Alconbury & Kimbolton