

Chairman's Annual Report 2012-13

Another year has flown by and its time to reflect on what we have achieved as a Council, what has gone well, where we could have improved and what the future holds.

A key starting point is to say that regrettably we have had to make a small increase in the Precept. Whilst efforts continued again this year to reduce costs, and we have made many in roads towards achieving this, things are getting more expensive.

The Finance Committee has put a lot of time and effort into looking at reducing costs which included taking out our insurance premium over a longer period, to attract a greater discount, letting of contracts on a term basis to allow both reduced and fixed costs and reducing our assets, such as removing litter bins and benches where they are not used.

In regard to contracts we have also looked out how we procure them. It is far better to pay a company to cut the grass when it is needed, up to a maximum number of cuts rather than an annual rate just to cut it.

We continue to fund PCSO Stephen Whittaker who provides not only a visual deterrent around the parish but also a point of contact to Hertfordshire Constabulary. He has formulated a good relationship not only with the younger members of the parish but those across all age groups. This has helped to both reduce and detect crime.

Within the last month he has also been instrumental in organising the road safety campaign week with local schools and tonight I would like to publically thank him not only for this but also for his commitment to the parish as a whole.

Whilst talking of other organisations we have continued to support the parish paths partnership that provides a wonderful service keeping our footpaths open and assessable.

We have also been in correspondence which is still ongoing with Standon charities, who own the allotment land.

Whilst mentioning the allotments this year we have changed the way tenants pay their rent, making it easier and more efficient. This has been achieved by introducing cheque payments and giving the option of paying by direct debit.

Dog mess continues to be a source of concern for residents living in the parish. There are some very responsible dog owners in the parish who clear up the mess their dog leaves, whom I would very much like to thank. Sadly there are

others who are not as responsible and I would remind them to always clear up after their dogs, where ever it is.

On a similar vain it would be nice to think that people took a pride in the parish and took their litter home. Sadly this is not always the case and like the dog mess also generates many complaints.

At this point it would be appropriate to thank all our litter pickers whom have done a valuable job in keeping our area looking clean and tidy again this year.

Another issue that has proved challenging over the last year is planning. With the changes to planning rules and the recent relaxation of them this has made it difficult for our voice to be heard. We will still continue to make comment however and keep the best interests of all those in the parish at the heart of them. We do not have a magic wand though and our voice alone is not always enough. I therefore hope with your help that we can develop a neighbourhood plan which although cannot stop development will influence property size, type and character.

One of the highlights of the year was being able to give Diamond Jubilee mugs to all those children who were schooled in the village. I still have mine from 1977 when the Parish Council did this for the Silver Jubilee.

As in past years there now follows a short video outlining some of the issues I have mentioned and others I have not.

SHOW VIDEO

I hope you enjoyed the video and it gave you a small insight into life within the parish during the 2012-13 period.

The two vacancies I spoke of last year were thankfully filled by Pat Foot and Colin Jenkins. Regrettably Colin has decided to leave and Ben Harris Quinney who has been a councillor since the last election has had to resign due to work pressures.

If upon hearing or reading this report and watching the video you are interested in becoming a councillor please speak to one of us tonight or contact myself or Belinda (our clerk) outside of this meeting.

In closing I hope you feel as councillors we have made the parish a great place to live, work and play, doing this with the community at its heart and serving parishioners well.