

Full Council – Chairman Myself and Vice Chair Rodney Butcher.

With the elections held in May 2015 I welcome all the new faces and fresh ideas brought to Council. Through the year we have had 2 Councillors stand down and following the advertising of these posts, it was pleasing to see there were a number of candidates wishing to become Councillors. I therefore welcome Philippa Crooke and James Reed who were co-opted to the Council and thank the unsuccessful candidates for their interest in standing to represent the community.

It has been a very busy but interesting year and the Council has continued with existing programmes and more importantly taken on other projects which will be evident in this report.

I am happy to report that the council have awarded grants by way of free use of council facilities, this year totalling £5,530. Special consideration of these various grants is given when organisers are also offering their services free to the village.

My appreciation and thanks go out to all of our Parish Councillors who have given freely of their time and knowledge, working to deliver improvements within the village. Each councillor brings something different to the table to ensure a balanced view of subjects to be discussed. Thank you.

Personnel – Chairman Andrew Wood.

I am pleased to say that the Bookings Clerks position has been filled by Sue Finch who brings a wealth of knowledge from her previous role with Huntingdonshire District Council.

The ground maintenance team comprising of, Graham Hill, Mark Maltby, Peter Marchant, Ray Allen and Jason Thorne. They have continued with the maintenance programme improving and decorating Queens Park, the Pavilion and the Austin Hall this year. We have delivered training plans to increase our workforce skills thereby reducing external contractor costs to the Council.

Our facilities are looked after by Beryl Maltby and Olive Lenaghan. I am pleased to report that following a suggestion from Beryl Maltby and after gaining the required qualifications, Beryl has made herself invaluable for spectators and players alike with the introduction of hot and cold refreshments at Queens Park has been a success on match days, well done.

Delivery of our financial reports is by Beverly Porter who has restructured our operating cost reports to such an extent that high cost elements can be focussed on and reductions made in managing our estate to allow improvements to our facilities in a timely manner.

Finally administration of the day to day running of council and therefore responsible for delivering a major part of our ongoing cost reduction, keeping council informed of all new laws, regulations, liaising with District, County, various authorities and the village businesses and residents alike to name just a few goes to our clerk Helen Taylor.

As you can see all of our workforce continue to rise to all challenges, helping improve our facilities and reduce costs to the benefit of the community. Therefore my personal appreciation goes out to our whole workforce whose motivation and dedication in helping with the changes that are required to bring improvements to the Parish of Yaxley are a must. Thank you.

Community Amenity - Chairman Graham Bellamy.

This is a very busy committee that has a wide range of responsibilities including cemeteries, play areas, equipment and allotments.

One of the major improvements in this year's programme has been the upgrade of the old sand based astro pitch to a 3G pitch. Bookings have increased and is being used by all age groups more recently we have an interest for a walking football session.

We are pleased to report that the 3G pitch will be inspected this month for inclusion on the FA register that allows for use in match play in all competitions.

Work has started on improving the Queens Park pitches by verti draining to improve the drainage and playing surface, this work is ongoing.

Discussions where local people were asked what improvements the council could make for the youth of the village. One request was to have the Multi Activity lighting switched on in the evening to allow free play in the facility. Following an inspection and upgrade of the lighting this work was completed in January.

Agreement has been reached on a junior play area for Middletons recreation ground and should be set for installation in the new financial year.

Work has commenced in the old cemetery, gravelling areas that have been hard to maintain. This will deliver long term cost savings with maintenance of the area.

The Council has continued to work with local groups and volunteers making improvements to our community.

One group is the Yaxley Countryside Trust led by Reg Bingham and his small band of volunteers on a planting scheme, pruning and hedge laying in areas around the village.

Another is Des Watt with his scheme to improve footpath access for all between Yaxley and Holme. The first section at the Wykes has been met with approval. We hope to continue with these and any other programmes in the coming year.

Council has collaborated with Fenland Trust in raising the funds for a defibrillator in the village. While funding has been successful we are awaiting sourcing from the British Heart Foundation and completion of this installation.

On the downside one of the continual issues raised by the whole community and more recently even our younger residents, is that of dog mess. We have installed additional bins, used footpath spray signage and called in the Huntingdonshire Dog Warden who has been successful with prosecution in areas. But this remains a constant issue that defies sense or reason when a majority of the community are trying and succeeding to make marked improvements our village.

Property - Chairman Rodney Butcher.

As reported last year structural surveys have highlighted areas for maintenance to the chimney and bell tower on the Owen Pooley building due to their listed building status this work has been delayed and will now take place during the Easter break.

We have taken receipt of the new liveried vehicle, its cage gives an element of safety in transporting waste, security of tools whilst working on site and reduces drive time of our specialist vehicles. Have also renewed various machines and tools, the main being purchase of a new Kubota mower and tools to allow some maintenance work to be taken in house again reducing expenditure.

Planning - Chairman Clive Thorne.

Our planning committee continue to strive to ensure plans are in keeping with the needs of the village aspects. This committee meets every 2 weeks and attends District meetings when required therefore can be a very busy team of councillors.

Going forward -

Our action plan going forward into next year include:-

Provision of adult external exercise equipment within the village

Improvement to Austin hall and council office

Village youth to assist with plans to extend the skate park

Support the Yaxley Festival with resource, facilities and sponsorship

Collaborate with The Fenland Trust over the heritage Trail through the village

Refurbishment of Queens park facilities heating and lighting

We will continue to review all finances, however we are finding certain services being cut by County and District and therefore costs are being passed down to parish level. More recently the decision to change the operational times of the streetlights in the coming year has added to our budget as the council decided on grounds of safety and security to have the lights left on.

Finally, having seen what a few volunteers and small community groups can do for the village. I would again like to extend this into the coming years. We can have teams working with and through the Council to develop local initiatives for all to enjoy. Therefore if you have time and are looking for a project or have an idea for a local scheme you think would help others within the community, please come along to any of the Council meetings or forward a letter to the Clerk with your ideas. While we may not be able to do all and where funding is required may mean pushing into following years, some however may be low cost and easy to implement therefore your ideas are welcome.

Thank you.

Kevin Gulson

Chairman

Yaxley Parish Council