



Chairman's report to the Yaxley Annual Parish Meeting 6th March 2017

Full Council – Chairman Kevin Gulson and Vice Chair Rodney Butcher.

It has been another busy year with the Council, we have continued to build on existing programmes while adding projects to improve facilities and areas for Yaxley.

The council continues to support activities and groups that give benefit to the whole of Yaxley and its parishioners. Some of these grants we have awarded by way of free use of council facilities, this year totalling £7,420. These grants are to groups such as Yaxley parent and toddler, Walking football and The Welcome club to name a few.

Free use of our facilities is considered when organisers also offer their services free or at greatly reduced cost to users.

Further grant funding is made available to groups such as the Library reading challenge, Citizens Advice, Cambridgeshire Search and Rescue and Fourfields School .

We continue to be a key contributor to the Yaxley Festival, sponsoring the stage with £10k additionally free use of all Parish Council facilities through the whole weekend.

Therefore we grant fund approx £23,000 throughout the year

Councillor Ann Rees retired and moved away this year after a number of years service to the community, she will be missed. Following the usual adverts for councillor I am pleased to report that we have co-opted Jonathan Orchard to council.

Long serving councillor Clive Thorne reached a great milestone with 40 years' service to the village. As a token of our appreciation he was awarded Honorary Freedom of the village.

I could mention each and every Councillor but to keep it short I would like to personally thank all Parish Councillors who have given their time freely to the community working to deliver improvements within the village. Each councillor brings something different to the table ensuring a balanced view of subjects to be discussed.

Thank you to you all, the community benefits because of you.

Personnel Committee – Chairman Andrew Wood.

This committee meet quarterly dealing with matters relating to our work forces safety, training and development etc.

We have had both Mark Maltby and Sue Finch move on from the Council, and Olive Lenaghan takes a well deserved retirement. We wish them all well for the future.

Unfortunately we have had to accept early retirement of our Ground Maintenance Supervisor Graham Hill, due to illness. Graham had dedicated 10 years to the Council and demonstrated local knowledge and skills which will prove difficult to replace. We wish Graham and his family well for the future.

We have been busy recruiting replacements to which we have had significant interest and have recently appointed Michelle Darbon as Booking Clerk and Andrew Wright as Grounds Maintenance Supervisor, both live in the village.

The ground maintenance team have continued their program of activities within the village. Many of the Council's open space areas have been, or are being cleared to encourage new growth, removing self set undergrowth and encourage wild life. Graham continued to provide guidance and experience where possible, Peter Marchant, Ray Allen & Jason Thorne have taken individual responsibility to successfully complete projects throughout the year.

We also had Jo Anderson support the team through the summer months then returning to University to complete his studies. Jo proved to be a great asset with a variety of work.

Our facilities continue to be looked after efficiently by Beryl Maltby, who has increased her responsibility following Olive's retirement.

Financial reporting is delivered by Beverly Porter, who analyses our costs, identifying areas of high spend and areas for improvement. The clarity of reporting is very much appreciated by the Full Council in assisting with the approval of expenditure and understanding our overall financial position.

During such a challenging year, our Clerk, Helen Taylor, has proven to be the valuable lynch pin that we have become accustomed to, at times working beyond the call of duty to ensure the smooth running of Council operations. This year Helen had taken on additional work due to staff changes, which the recruitment process will alleviate. Her work involves keeping council informed of all new laws and regulations, liaising with various authorities including Cambridgeshire County Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, Police and local groups, encouraging a closer working relationship with them while keeping an eye on our cost base. With all this going on, it's pleasing to offer our congratulations to Helen in achieving the CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration) qualification, well done Helen and thank you for your dedicated work through the year.

As you can see, our workforce has continued to rise to the challenges, improving facilities and reducing costs to the benefit of the community. Using their individual skills and expertise to ensure Yaxley village continues to be maintained and supported. Thank you.

Community Facilities Committee - Chairman Graham Bellamy.

This committee meets monthly and has a wide range of responsibilities including cemeteries, street furniture, play areas, pitches, equipment and allotments.

The work program this year included repairing and painting the Parish Council bus shelters, gravelling of the old cemetery area started late last year, painting the Austin Hall through the summer, while maintaining weekly schedule of emptying the 60+ bins around the village every week and maintaining Parish Council grass areas.

Use of the 3G pitch has gone from strength to strength we currently have a waiting list for evening sessions and weekend games including new football sessions for juniors.

Following completion of verti –draining at Queens Park, the playing surfaces have been greatly improved as reported in this year's FA inspections. This should help with reducing damage and cancellations due to water logged pitches etc. Again these pitches are being booked up well in advance.

The main equipment purchases this year have been a triple mower for use at Queens Park and Middletons Recreation ground and a new Kubota mower, trading in similar older equipment.

A full survey of Parish Council trees has been carried out in line with our 5 year inspection requirement, and a program of advised remedial work is being carried out by our grounds team where possible and the remainder work outsourced. All of this is being delivered to a digital mapping program which will help with future maintenance requirements.

Two years ago this committee were successful in their LHI (Local Highways Improvement) bid for a safe crossing at the London Road end of Broadway, however we have been less than happy with the pinch point supplied. Therefore a further LHI bid has been included in this year's round requesting that the pinch point to be upgraded to a full crossing.

Two defibrillators have been installed in Yaxley one fixed outside the doctors surgery and the second, to the new fire station. Thanks to all helping with fund raising to purchase the defibs and weather proof housings, also to Gemma Saunders founder of Defibrillators for Yaxley, for ongoing maintenance of these units.

The new junior play area and picnic tables in Middletons recreation ground has been seen as a great addition to the existing play area.

We continue to collaborate with local groups, such as Yaxley Countryside Trust led by Reg Bingham and his small band of volunteers, agreeing various planting schemes, pruning and hedge laying in areas around the village.

Councillor Philippa Croke is leading on the improvement scheme off Seaton Close/Green Lane, working with volunteers. The area is being opened up and self set trees reduced to encourage wild life. We are extremely grateful to Des Watt for supplying the footpath from Seaton Close to the play area, thanks to all concerned.

I can say that working with a number of fellow Councillors and volunteers is very satisfying, when you can stand back having learned new skills such as hedge laying, or even just clearing an area knowing you are making long term improvements. If anyone is interested in joining in with volunteer work within the village such as above, please do not hesitate to contact the clerk who can forward your names accordingly.

On the downside, one of the continual issues raised by the whole community is that of dog mess. We have installed additional bins, used footpath spray signage and publicised the issue, but this is still a constant concern in Yaxley. Therefore, I ask if you see or know who is avoiding taking responsibility for their pooch, please help the village by taking the time to contact the Huntingdonshire Dog Warden Service who will look to educate and if required prosecute offenders. I hasten to add that it is a minority causing this big and messy problem and thank the majority of dog owners that take responsibility for their dogs.

Furthermore can I ask for everyone's help by reporting acts of vandalism and anti social behaviour, not just to the council or only on social media, but directly to the police as they cannot act on third hand reports. This then hits the crime figures for Yaxley, helping us raise the need for more local policing. Recent vandalism has cost the community over £2,000 plus loss of income for football matches.

Property Committee - Chairman Rodney Butcher.

This committee meets quarterly and looks after the buildings, maintenance and facilities within.

The planned building maintenance program for this year has been completed, thanks to our workforce a majority of this work has been carried out in house making cost savings.

Yaxley now has green credentials, having recently added solar panels to the Austin Hall. We are looking to see the benefit coming through on power cost savings for future years.

Cambridgeshire County Council have removed the old Youth Porta cabin from Middletons Recreation Ground with no plans for replacement, the Parish Council is reviewing premises and requirements going forward.

The planned office extension has commenced and is due for completion by the end of March. This will help greatly with the administration of the village.

Planning Committee - Chairman Paul Russell.

It has been quite a busy year, with the committee meeting every two weeks subject to planning applications, and we have reviewed approx. 80 planning applications. These range from the Roxhill Development 610 houses, through to smaller housing / industrial estates, to single storey domestic extensions and 'change-of-use' applications.

We strive to ensure all approved plans are in keeping with the needs of the village, bearing in mind neighbours, the effect on the village, visual impact, traffic concerns and public safety. While we are not always able to get the result we want, we will persevere, promoting Yaxley's interest.

Members of this committee also attend District meetings to put our case in more detail when necessary, so you can see a very busy team of councillors.

Looking forward -

The Councils action plan looking forward include:-

- Provision of adult external exercise equipment within the village

- Extension to the skate park or BMX track

- Refurbishment of Queens park facilities heating and lighting

- Review building use following loss of CCC youth Club

- Working with CCC & HDC to ensure safe walking/cycling routes to the new secondary school at Hampton

Continued financial restraint without loss of key services delivered by the Parish Council.

Review -

While this is not a complete view of the services we are responsible for and deliver, I hope it goes some way to demonstrating the wide range and extent of the works carried out by Yaxley Parish Council.

Finally, it has been an extremely busy year. So once again I will thank all the councillors for their time, our personnel as a whole, working to deliver our requirements and not forgetting the band of volunteers delivering a variety of schemes to improve Yaxley. Thank you and here's looking to the coming year.

Kevin Gulson

Chairman

Yaxley Parish Council