

CLIFTON UPON DUNSMORE PARISH COUNCIL

Chair's Annual Report – 2014 /2015

I shall recognise up front that this has been a difficult year for the Parish Council.

There have been a number of resignations, for a number of reasons. However, I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Councillors who have recently moved on from the parish council for all their hard work over the years and the legacy of a robust parish council that they leave behind.

You will be aware of Doug Hall's stalwart work as Chair for some time, Lynda Palmer took a great interest in the trees locally and remains on the burial committee. I should like to thank Vince Davies for stepping in as chairman, Sue Marsay for her work on the Burial Committee and David Ellis for his work on the playing fields.

We've been fortunate to welcome two new councillors to the parish council recently who have great knowledge and experience of public life. They not only bring their understanding of modern ways of working, but also a wide range of skills that they contribute to the parish council and so to the village.

Between the current parish councillors, there are now professional skills that range from community engagement, fund raising, working with public bodies, governance, risk management to accountancy and project management. I hope this provides some comfort that the village remains in good hands.

We have now got another election coming up on the 7 May, which, as it is happening on the same day as the General Election, we hope will result in a higher turnout than is traditionally the case for a parish council election.

Over the past 12 months work has continued to manage the village facilities that so many people take for granted – for instance the churchyard, allotments, lighting, playing fields and pavilion – if I could make special mention of David Bromwich, who has been a key player in maintaining the practicalities of the village, such as the lampposts and playing fields, during his time as a parish councillor.

To look at some of the past year's achievements:

- We have finally got seats at both of the bus stops that take villagers into town.
- We have achieved funding to smarten some parts of the village up – such as the telephone box and bus shelters, which will happen imminently.
- The benches in the playing fields have also been refurbished.

With regards to the churchyard, the grass cutting contract has just been given to a local contractor.

A major success for the parish council is that the speed limits around the village are in the process of being reduced:

- A 30mph speed limit is now extended along Newton Road to past the cemetery and a 50mph speed limit and this will continue into a 50mph speed limit going towards the St Thomas Cross public house on Newton Road. There will also be an extension of this reduced speed limit going out through Hilmorton Lane and up Lilbourne Lane, heading towards the A5

Currently we also have two requests that are being considered by our County Councillor to address two local highways safety issues: that being the junction with Hilmorton Lane and Lilbourne Road j/w main street. We will get the result of the deliberations on this next week.

The Parish Council has continued to develop a good relationship with Urban and Civic who are responsible for the BT mast site development, who now attend meetings when requested.

The parish council is introducing more modern ways of working that meets the requirements of the transparency code, which is now in effect. In common with all parish councils in the country, we are

required to maintain a website, which must contain certain information. There is a list of 15 items which must be available for public consumption, such as

1. Councils' code of conduct
2. Transparent information about council payments
3. Calendar of meetings
4. Approved minutes for at least one year
5. Current agendas
6. Budget and precept information for current or next financial year
7. Complaints procedure

And the list continues.... Complying with these requirements must now become a priority of the parish council.

In recognition of the lack of a robust website, an email list has been introduced as an interim measure. Emails are sent to villagers who have requested copies of the minutes, agendas and local alerts and the newly introduced action plan. If you would like to receive this too, please let me have your email address before you leave.

In order to further enhance the confidence of the village of the transparency of work of the parish council, we now

- Maintain a log of all actions that are required as a result of decisions made at council meetings.
- Record all meetings that take place with outside bodies through an external meeting log
- Maintain electronic copies of all quotes and

These too will end up on the website but are currently available to anyone and the action log is automatically sent to those on the email list.

- In addition, the documentation sub committee are also in the process of creating a data bank of all the documentation that relates to the work of the parish council and the public assets that the parish council is responsible for.

I should like to thank Councillors Leigh Hunt and Philip Morris-Jones for the continued support they continue to show for the village.

Finally, and most importantly, I should like to thank the villagers that are attending parish council meetings in increasing numbers to inform the thinking of the work that the parish councillors undertake. We sincerely hope that this trend continues so that we are able to address the many varied local concerns that arise.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR CLIFTON UPON DUNSMORE PARISH COUNCIL FOR 2014/15

Financial report

Due to the significant changes that have recently taken place on the parish council, councillors have not been in a position to review or approve the unaudited accounts. This will have taken place by the next parish council meeting on 13 April 2015 in the meantime, I shall present an overview of the accounts as we currently understand them. I should confirm that the accounts are available to anyone who wishes to see them in the meantime.

The parish council began the year with £27,697 in the bank. This was an unexpected beginning to the year, as Rugby Borough Council had paid the Parish Council its precept before the end of the 2013/14 financial year and so the financial year end funds can seem somewhat misleading. In fact the true figure for the start of the financial year is £16,324.

For the financial year 2014/15 the parish council received £22,685 in precepts from the Borough Council. We also received monies from the football clubs' use of the playing fields, from the allotments and grazing fields, three grants that we were able to obtain from both the County and Borough Councils and we have made some inroads in achieving funding for the website. We have had a generous donation from one villager and currently have two promises of funding to come.

Significant outgoings this year are for the usual costs of running the parish council meetings, the burial committee precept, street lighting costs, insurance and maintenance costs associated with the playing fields. Although we have also spent money on maintenance of village street furniture, this was offset by the grants that were obtained.

Having started the year with funds available of £16.3k, we have finished the year with a bank balance of £17.6k. However this does not take into account the cost of the first by election, which the Parish Council has yet to be billed for and we expect to incur £800 should there be a further contested election in May.

I am pleased to add that we anticipate that the bank balance will become far healthier once we have gone through the process of selling the land on which the air raid shelter in Church Street currently stands, which is a piece of work that has been on going for some considerable time.

Marion Nash
27 March 2015