

CLIFTON UPON DUNSMORE PARISH COUNCIL
Chair's Annual Report 2015 -16

Firstly, thank you to all the individuals and groups representatives that are here tonight.

The start of this municipal year, and the uncontested Parish Council elections in May, brought a number of challenges and changes for the Parish Council; with the resignation of 3 Councillors and the Clerk.

I would like to place on record my thanks to Bill Ballard, Kevin Rochford and Ed Bembridge and our former Clerk, Mary Barratt, for their time and commitment to the Parish Council during their tenure. In particular, Mary Barratt had served the Parish Council for many years and has been missed by many of her friends in the village.

After a period of hiatus, with an interim Clerk in May and June 2015, we were fortunate to recruit an exceptionally qualified and experienced Clerk, Christine Lord, who began work with us on 1 July 2015. Christine has supported the council to address all the gaps identified and bring its work up to speed to meet continually changing requirements. It has taken a lot of work by everyone on the Parish Council to get things back on track.

We were also fortunate to co-opt two new councillors to the parish council – Councillors Crispin Palmer and Heather Duncan - who between them bring a wealth of transferable business skills, knowledge and experience of public life to the parish council, and so to the parish. Councillor Duncan is also able to represent and engage the valuable area of the parish in which she lives; The Locks. This becomes increasingly important as the development of the Mast Site continues.

The professional skills and experience now available to the parish council through the councillors now range from community engagement, fund raising, partnership work, governance, risk management, accountancy and project management. In addition to this, four of our Members have undertaken formal training provided by the Warwickshire Association of Local Councils this year. This wealth of experience has been fundamental to the continuing development of the Parish Council and the service is now offers to the local community.

The need to identify and work in collaboration with partners becomes one of the council's next challenges. This makes increasing sense as the work of local communities become more localised, to the extent that I am informed that this way of working will form part of the forthcoming Charter for Parish Councils.

The Parish Councillors have worked hard this year and have achieved a great deal:

I am proud that our new website, which went live in September, complies with the requirements of the Transparency Act 2015. The site now provides Agenda and Minutes, details of councillors and their roles, details of Council's finances and policies and above all the website regular local news, alerts and information updates for our residents. The website which has around 300 regular users, is complemented by our Facebook page, which provides a more informal platform for 2-way communication.

Anecdotally, it has become clear that residents like the way that things are now going with the parish council as they know what is going on and have an opportunity to influence things. We continue to receive really positive feedback about the transparency and accountability that is now evident of the work undertaken by the parish council.

Our administration has been strengthened with monthly financial reports, the development of a Health and Safety Policy, a website, social media policy and a formal complaints procedure.

We have encouraged external speakers to meetings, with the developers of the mast site, the Local Plan team and the Leader of the Borough Council all coming to give informative presentations to Members and residents.

In February the Parish Council ran its first community event for many years. The Connecting Clifton event was designed to explain what the Parish Council does, engage residents and encourage them to join in local activities. The event was very well received and we look to run another next year.

In terms of environmental improvements we have also been busy. At the playing field the football pitch has been refurbished, new teams engaged and the moles, which were causing a health safety issue to park users, have been removed. The interior of the pavilion has been thoroughly cleaned and its security improved by the installation of the key safe.

We have arranged for a large and potentially dangerous branch in the churchyard to be removed legally and safely, and arranged for the County Council to remedy issues such as potholes, blocked gullies and damaged verges on behalf of our residents.

In March the Parish Council organised a Clean for the Queen litter pick at both in the village and at the Locks. We were delighted and encouraged by the number of residents who turned up on a cold Saturday morning to take part, and did a fantastic job.

I am encouraged by the progress that we have made this year, and hope that we will continue serve the community with a strengthened parish council after the local elections on 5 May.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the parish councillors who, despite most having full-time jobs, give up their spare time freely, for their hard work throughout a demanding year. I would also like to thank our Borough Councillor Leigh Hunt and County Councillor Philip Morris-Jones for the 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 2015-16

Financial report 2015-16

Due to the earliness of the Annual Parish Meeting ahead of the Easter period (and prior to the end of the financial year) it has not been possible to submit the final accounts for the year 2015/16 for internal audit.

I anticipate that this will have taken place by the next parish council meeting on 4 April 2016 in the meantime; I shall present an overview of the accounts as we currently understand them. I should confirm that the accounts will be subject to the Annual Return External Audit process in June 2016, and will be available to anyone who wishes to see them during the period of public inspection.

In the meantime; the parish council began the year with £17,821.36 in the bank; of which around £2,750 is earmarked for the replacement of play equipment.

For the financial year 2015/16 the parish council received £23,252 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 and we have received some generous donations from local businesses for funding towards the creation of the website.

Significant outgoings this year are for the usual costs of running the parish council meetings, street lighting costs, insurance and maintenance costs associated with the pavilion, playing fields and street lighting.

Having started the year with funds available of £17.8k, we have finished the year with a bank balance of around £22.7k. However this does not take into account the cost of the work to re-site and improve the football pitch and legal expenses incurred during the process of marketing the land on which the air raid shelter in Church Street currently stands; which the Parish Council has yet to be invoiced for and we expect to incur a total of approximately £1,300.

Marion Nash
21 March 2016