

22 May 12

HAXEY PARISH COUNCIL – CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT AND FUTURE PLANS

INTRODUCTION

My aim is to provide a brief report on the work carried out by the Parish Council over the past 12 months and the priorities for the current year.

The first point I would like to make is that in considering the current economic climate the Parish Council has frozen the Precept for the third consecutive year.

The Parish Council's workload has continued to increase over the past year and with the recent introduction of the Localism Bill and the continued emphasis of "the Big Society", there is an expectation of even more issues to be dealt with at the Parish level. Planning matters, Parish Land Management, general Parish maintenance management and issues raised by Parishioners are dealt with on a day to day basis by the Parish Council Clerk in consultation with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the various Committees and Working Groups set up by the Council; moreover, there is significant Councillor's representation at local and County organisations such as the Haxey Combined Charities, Haxey Endowed School Estates, local Police forums, the East Riding and Northern Lincolnshire Local Councils Association and the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust.

There is virtually constant communication with all elements of our Principal Authority, North Lincolnshire Council and we are privileged to have one of our Ward Councillors also serving as a Parish Councillor, which over the last year, has provided considerable improvement in the communication between NLC and the Parish. Major consultations have included the recent Boundary Commission recommendations, the Local Development Framework, Housing and Employment Land Allocations Development Plan and the Windfarms – Inland report. Details of results of this representation are recorded in the minutes of the monthly Parish Council meetings which are published on the Parish Council website and Village Notice Boards.

The Parish Council has seen an increase in planning activity over the last year, considering 79 Planning Applications: 63 Parish Council recommendations were supported by the Principal Authority and 16 rejected. Following the suggestion from last year's meeting, a period before each monthly Council Meeting has been introduced for the public to raise matters with the Parish Council. Parishioners are encouraged to use these opportunities to express their views.

This last year has also seen the use of Open Meetings for particularly important issues that affect the Parish. These have provided a successful local "sounding board" and the Parish Council will continue to use these events as and when appropriate.

Due to the increased workload on the Parish Council, the lack of a permanent primary-use office and meeting room is proving a difficult administrative issue. The Parish Council is acutely aware of the problems it faces and, over the next year, will be taking action to come up with potential cost-effective solutions to enable it to keep pace with administrative demands.

Over the last year, major issues the Council has dealt with have included a survey of public transport and pick-up/drop-off points in the Villages and an affordable Housing Survey. Further work on these issues is expected over the coming year. The Council has disposed of redundant bus shelters and continued the development of the Allotment Site on Cove Rd in conjunction with the Allotment Association and here again work will continue over the short to medium term.

Continuing Projects in the St Nicholas Closed Churchyard, which is the Parish Council's statutory responsibility, include tree and headstone safety surveys and pathway and fencing upgrades which ensure these areas remain safe. The tree survey and subsequent rectification work and the pathway and fencing upgrades, which have incurred a considerable cost to the Parish Council, have now been completed. The Parish Council also finalised the purchase of a small cemetery adjacent to the current Churchyard, to

provide the Parish with more burial ground and a Memorial Wall. Recent preparatory work on this Project has seen the completion of a lay-by on Church Lane and further work is expected over the coming year as the project is taken forward and the site prepared for use.

Flood Management is another area that the Council has continued to pursue in conjunction with the Principal Authority and the local Drainage Board. Significant alleviation work has now been completed on Haxey Lane and in Low Burnham as well as major works on Thinholme Lane Drain in Westwoodside. Flooding issues continue to be a concern for the Parish and Flood Management will remain of major interest to the Council over the coming years as the Environment Agency devolves some of its responsibility to local organisations as described in the Isle of Axholme Flood Risk Management Strategy on which the Council was consulted.

The Parish Council has inaugurated the provision of a Community Emergency Plan which is nearing completion and publication and arranged for a Parish-wide survey to gather information for the plan. As part of the Emergency Plan, the Council has purchased a container, sited at the Allotment Site, which has enabled salt and grit to be stored for the replenishment of the road salt containers around the Parish and also a limited number of FLOODSAX for use in the case of a localised flooding event. The Council has worked closely with North Lincolnshire Council in the development of a contingency plan in the event of heavy snow and the management of the plan locally, should snowfall on the scale of 2010/11 occur. In general, the weather this last winter did not cause the same problems as the previous winter; however, the contingencies introduced did improve the reaction to the ice and snow events that did occur in the Parish and lessons have continue to be identified.

The last year has also seen the Parish Council mount a successful lobby to retain Haxey's Library facilities and there is a plan to work with the Principal Authority to improve and increase these facilities in the future. A proposal to sell off the toilet Block in Haxey has also been reversed. Work to implement the actions raised by the Parish Plan, completed in 2010, has continued and following the recent disbandment of the Parish Plan Action Group, the Parish Council has established a Parish Plan Working Group, which gives residents the opportunity to join. This Group will carry on the implementation task and look to any future updating of what is considered by the Principal Authority a model plan. To date over half the actions from the Plan have been implemented.

Ongoing projects that the Parish Council will continue to support include the CPRE Best Kept Village Competition, which resulted in Westwoodside Playing Fields being awarded Best Facility in 2011. Our first Parish Handyman unfortunately had to retire earlier in the year; however, we have now recruited a new Parish Handyman and he will continue his work around the Villages with, amongst other things, a planting scheme and the provision of hanging baskets in the summer. Over the past year, the Parish Council has supported financially the local Village Halls, Playing Fields and Sports Clubs and this support will continue. The Council financed the adoption of the BT Kiosk in Low Burnham in 2011, funded the cleaning of the Haxey War Memorial on Burrell's Corner and actively supported the 90th Anniversary of the British Legion Ceremony held there on 11/11/2011. There is a plan to continue this event, which included representation from local Schools, in the future. The Parish Council will continue to support the Haxey Parish Camera Club Photographic Competition and the Allotment Association Annual Awards.

Despite some last minute problems with funding from the original project sponsors, the Council has now completed the Heritage Trail throughout the Parish, which is proving to be a popular source of information for Residents and Visitors. The Council intends to update and produce a Parish Directory over the coming year.

The Parish Council's Awards Working Group has commissioned work to refurbish the historic documents held by the Parish and, for the future; the intention is for these artefacts to be made available for viewing by local educational organisations and those that are interested in Haxey Parish and the Isle of Axholme

heritage. Any solution to a larger Parish Office should include the facility to display these important documents to the general public.

Speeding has also been a major focus for the Parish Council which has supported North Lincolnshire Council in the forthcoming reduction of the speed limits on the A 161 and Doncaster Rd. For the future the Parish Council will be continuing to press for a reduction to 20 MPH in the vicinity of local schools.

Currently, the Parish Council is actively supporting the celebrations to mark the Queen's 60th Jubilee. Activities are in their final stages of planning and the Council will be working with other groups to provide, amongst other things, a beacon ceremony and the presentation of mementos of the occasion to local primary and nursery school children. The over-70s Party continues to be supported and the Parish Council acknowledges and thanks Jenny Eckhardt for all her hard work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of all Parish Councillors and to thank Councillors, the Vice Chairman and the Parish Council Clerk for the support they have provided me over the past year.

QUESTIONS