

07 May 14

## **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 highlight plans for the coming year.

Despite the Governments handing down of cuts to Council Tax benefit to the Principal Authority, North Lincolnshire Council(NLC) maintained its current policy of devolving the full precept to the Parish if the precept was kept to last year’s amount. The Parish Council has therefore frozen the Precept for the fifth consecutive year; however, the Finance Committee and the Full Council has cautioned that dependent on national and Principal Authority future policy, this will probably be the last year when it will be able to maintain the Precept at the current level.

The Parish Council’s workload has continued at a good pace over the past year as the effects of “localism” continue to play their part on the 1<sup>st</sup> tier of local democracy. Planning matters, including enforcement, 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 continues to be significant Councillor representation at local and County organisations such as

the Haxey Combined Charities, the Governing Body of Haxey and Westwoodside Primary Schools, Haxey Endowed School Estates, local Police forums, Isle of Axholme Physically Handicapped Society, the East Riding and Northern Lincolnshire Local Councils Association, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, CPRE and latterly in the governance of Westwoodside Playing Fields Association.

There is virtually constant communication with all elements of North Lincolnshire Council and we continue to have the benefit of one of our Ward Councillors also serving as a Parish Councillor, which has maintained the improvement in communication between NLC and the Parish. Major consultations have included commenting on local area environmental and drainage projects, updates on the North Lincolnshire Definitive Map and the local development framework plans for neighbouring authorities. A National Neighbourhood Planning survey has been completed and the Council has been actively involved in the dialogue about abandoned horses and “fly grazing” in the local area. The Council has been briefed on the new Scrap Dealers Act, has been involved in consultations with the Environment Agency on various issues and also with the roll out of the NLC Rural Broadband Scheme. Latterly the Council has been drawn into the consultation on the future of local Post Offices. The Council has been briefed on “fracking” issues by a local Resident with an interest and has been formally advised by a multi-national energy company, TESLA, that it would be surveying land in the south east of the Parish to fulfil a Government contract to detect natural resources.

The Council has also been consulted on the NLC Mineral Planning Policy. Finally, last July, the Parish Council was addressed by the Humberside Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr Matthew Grove. Details of results of these consultations, briefings and advisory notices 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 a similar volume of planning applications to last year and we continue to develop our good relationship with NLC Planners. We maintain the dialogue with NLC and are continuing to adapt the Parish Council's reporting procedure for planning applications. This year has also seen the NLC's Planning Committee visit the Parish for site visits prior to decisions on planning applications and Parish Council representatives have attended these visits. One of the visits concerned a housing development by North Lincolnshire Homes in Haxey which had been the subject of considerable public interest the previous year and whilst the Parish Council was content with the final plan for the accommodation, it had requested that the road should be widened and that priority should be given to local people for allocation of the properties. Unfortunately and despite lobbying by the Parish Council and both Ward Councillors, both of these requests could not be taken forward for administrative and legal reasons. The Parish Council and Ward Councillors are now looking for other avenues to pursue particularly to ensure that local people receive some priority for allocation. The Parish Council considered a total of 79 Planning Applications of which 41 were

passed without comment and 38 were commented on. The Parish Council objected to 21. The Principal Authority agreed with the Parish Council on 8 applications, overruled the Parish Council recommendation in 4 cases and 3 applications were withdrawn. Six have yet to be decided. We have continued the practice of dedicating a period before each monthly Council Meeting for the public to raise matters with the Parish Council. Subjects this last year have included the Doncaster Rd drainage plan, Haxey Playing Fields and Gollands Lane traffic issues. Parishioners are encouraged to continue to use these opportunities to express their views.

The Parish Council has continued the assessment of Westwoodside Playing Fields facilities to support its operations and following the lack of local support for the incumbent Management Committee, the Parish Council has now stepped in and taken over as Sole Trustee for the Westwoodside Playing Fields Association. This new organisation has been cleared and registered with the Charity Commission and a new Westwoodside Playing Fields Association Management Committee has been formed and activated under the Chairmanship of Mr Richard Carter. As a parallel activity, the Parish Council, supported by the Clerk applied to NLC for an improvement grant for the playing fields infrastructure and this was approved by NLC in June 2013. The improvement plan, which required Planning Permission consisted of 5 projects: provision and siting of a storage container for the storage of sports equipment; refurbishment of the car park and access road; installation of extra security lighting; extension to the Pavilion Function Room; extension to the

Pavilion Meeting Room and the construction of Offices. The building work included upgrading the fire and security systems in the Pavilion, the installation of a full time surveillance system and decoration and carpeting of the new rooms. A contractor was selected to carry out the work in October 2013 and the projects were successfully completed in March 2014. The project was overspent to the tune of approximately £300, primarily due to unforeseen Building Regulation requirements, in addition extra security measures were also identified during the construction and a further grant request to cover these costs was submitted to NLC by the Parish Council Clerk. This application was also successful and NLC awarded the Parish Council 90% of this extra cost last month. The project has resulted in a substantial improvement to the infrastructure of the Playing Fields and has complemented the extant sporting facilities and provides local and neighbouring Parish Residents with a first class facility. Bookings for the use of the refurbished rooms have commenced and the Management Committee's next steps are to continue the improvement programme and through competitive charges encourage more use of the facilities to ensure adequate maintenance funding is achieved. I would like to take this opportunity to formally acknowledge and express my thanks for the excellent administrative and practical work of the new Management Committee and the sterling work of the Parish Council Clerk in supporting the whole project. Further work will continue over the next year to consolidate the Pavilion as a cost effective headquarters for Parish Council activities which will enable the organisation to keep pace with it's increased administrative demands.

Over the last year, work on improving the Allotment Site to improve drainage was completed and Cllrs Boor and Whitehead have now taken on responsibility for the judging of the Allotment Associations annual competition. The survey of St Nicholas Closed Churchyard has finally been completed and the report delivered. The next stage of the process over the coming year and beyond is to fund and commission the work on the memorials considered “a risk”. Work has continued to establish the Parish Cemetery on Church Lane and the construction of the Memorial Wall was completed in April. The next step is to prepare the burial ground and raise the necessary regulatory and administrative paperwork to enable the cemetery to be brought into service as the Church burial ground runs out of space. In this centenary year of the Great War, the Parish Council has registered our 2 War Memorials with the national organisation and action is in hand to identify funding to be used to refurbish and protect the memorials for the future. The Council has completed its periodic valuation of Parish land through a local Estate Agent and is currently in the process of bringing the Westwoodside Playing Fields owned and leased land up to date with the Land Registry. Parish land Tenants have been formally advised that the land valuation was ongoing as required by law and a decision on whether any increase is to be implemented in October 2014 will be taken by the Council later in the year. Consultation with Westwoodside Townsfolk took place in 2013 and the door remains open for dialogue with other local Townsfolk with the aim of providing them with any administrative support they may require for the formal upkeep and public liability for the

meres and pinfolds. The Contractor identified to take on Parish Handyman duties currently remains in post.

The Council has consulted with NLC and supported the reduction of the speed limits on the A161. The re-design of the crossroads at the Park Drain has been completed; although there have continued to be incidents involving the crossroads since the modification. The situation will continue to be monitored. Severn Trent Water has recently completed a protracted consultation on an updated system to alleviate the long standing foul water flooding on Doncaster Rd and has applied for Planning Permission to carry out the work. The consultation has proved to be a successful exercise and residents and agencies all agreed on the way forward. Once the new system has been completed, NLC has indicated that Doncaster Rd resurfacing will take place.

Training has been or will be provided to Councillors in Localism, Hydraulic Fracturing technology, Neighbourhood Planning, and Advanced Chairmanship. Councillors have also attended a Planning and Emergency Seminar with a view to updating the Parish Community Emergency Plan and received training in Employment Law. The Council has also been represented at the Local Council's Association Conferences to take advantage of the updating of topical and important issues. The Parish Council has continued to support the CPRE's Best Kept Village Competitions and the Contractor employed last year to provide and maintain the floral displays around the Villages has been reappointed. The redesign of Dr Dysons Garden on Haxey

High Street to a children's theme has been successfully completed and an opening ceremony took place last Summer.

During the last year the Parish Council has provided financial support to the Isle of Axholme Physically Handicapped Society, Westwoodside Village Hall, Westwoodside and Haxey Playing Fields, Haxey Cricket Club, Haxey Bowls Club and the Axholme Raiders and Westwoodside Rangers football teams. Moreover, the Council has once again fully supported the annual Over 70's party, which continues to be ably organised by Jennie Ekhardt, to whom the Council passes on their sincere thanks. The Council marked the annual Remembrance Day commemoration with a well attended "parade" at the Haxey Memorial on 11<sup>th</sup> of the 11<sup>th</sup> 2013 followed by the Church Service on the following Sunday. Both events were supported for the third year by a Bugler through South Axholme Academy. Finally, the Council continues to support the Axholme Camera Club and the annual competition results will be announced during this meeting.

For the coming year the Parish Council will carry on the work on ongoing projects, continue to develop its relationship with the Principal Authority, will be actively pursuing the preservation of the Parish War Memorials and will commence a project to identify funding to replace the Parish Notice boards where required. The Council will also continue to look to improve its E-communications. Looking to the medium term future, the main aim of the Council will continue to be on the development of a strategy for Localism in



the Parish and the Council will carry out investigations into the establishment of Conservation Areas. Ultimately the aim is for the production of a Neighbourhood Plan to complement the Parish Plan produced in 2010; however, the Council is of the view that this process has still to be fully developed nationally and acknowledges that the production of a Neighbourhood Plan for Haxey Parish could take some time.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Finally, I would like to welcome Cllr George Fiddler who was co-opted to the Council last June and 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 first-rate support they have provided me with over the past year.

### **QUESTIONS**