

22 May 17

## **HAXEY PARISH COUNCIL – CHAIRMAN’S ANNUAL REPORT AND**

### **FUTURE PLANS**

The aim of this report is to provide a summary of the work carried out by the Parish Council over the past financial year and highlight any plans for the coming year.

First, acknowledgements: in late 2016, the Parish Council recognised with sadness the passing of William Eckhardt, a past long-standing member and Chair of the Parish Council, Ward Councillor and Mayor of North Lincolnshire. Earlier this year the Council acknowledged the passing of Carole Moyle, who was a member from 1991 to 1999 and the first Lady Chair of the Parish Council and also Marilyn Henwood, an outstanding and hard working member of the Westwoodside Playing Fields Association Management Committee. Memorials to recognise these steadfast members of the community are being finalised or planned.

Moving on to Council business: once again the Parish Council is pleased to report that the annual precept has been frozen for the coming year at £40,000. The Principal Authority increased the Community Charge again by 2% as authorised by National Government to be spent predominantly on community welfare and social issues.

The Parish Council's workload has continued apace over the past year. Planning matters, including enforcement reporting, Parish Land Management, general Parish maintenance management and issues raised by Parishioners continue to be 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 Local Police Forums, Haxey Combined Charities and Endowed School Estates, the Governing Bodies of local Primary Schools and village amenities, the Isle of Axholme Physically Handicapped Society, the East Riding and Northern Lincolnshire Local Councils Association (ERNLLCA), Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, the North East Bassetlaw Community Liaison Group, CPRE and in the governance as Sole Trustee of Westwoodside Playing Fields Association.

Day to day communication with all elements of North Lincolnshire Council (NLC) has continued and the benefit of one of our Ward Councillors also serving as a Parish Councillor has continued the improvement in relationships between NLC and the Parish and the reaction time to emerging issues. Major consultations have included commenting where applicable on local area environmental and mineral plans and projects, the NLC Housing Market assessment, the North Lincolnshire Local Plan and NLC Licensing policy, the Isle of Axholme and North Nottinghamshire Water Level Management initiative and the Misson Neighbourhood Plan.

The re-location of the Haxey and Westwoodside Post Offices has been completed and subsequently, the Greenhill Office has been subject to reduced hours, which has caused some concern. Any future developments will be kept under scrutiny. The disabled parking bay at the Haxey Surgery has been introduced and there are plans to improve the off road parking at the site. The Council has continued its involvement in potential Hydro Carbon activity in the Parish and has introduced a standing agenda item to ensure we are kept up to date on events; however, there has been little activity to report over the last year and Cllr Fiddler continues to represent the Council on a neighbouring Community Liaison Group. Information on this issue is recorded in the minutes of the monthly Parish Council meetings and Information Updates section, which are published on the Parish Council website.

The Parish Council has maintained a generally good working relationship with NLC Planning Members and Officers and we were pleased to have the recently established new team of NLC Planners attend one of our monthly meetings to answer questions on several long standing and potentially troublesome Planning Applications, which the Council has introduced as standing agenda items to ensure that we are kept up to date. These include the Low Burnham garage, Clampit Creek and Walkabout Farm, Haxey Carr issues, caravans at Tindale Bank, East Lound and Langholme Lane and the major concern of the establishment of so-called “Children’s homes” from out of area organisations at residential accommodation in Haxey and Low Burnham. Both of these “homes” have continued to operate while the various

administrative processes to try and gain licences or change of use for buildings have taken place. We have again seen a larger volume of planning applications to the previous year. During 2015/16 (May to April), the Parish Council considered a total of 80 Planning Applications of which 53 were passed with or without comment and the Council objected to 27. The Principal Authority agreed with the Parish Council's objection on 13 applications, overruled the Parish Council in 7 cases and 7 have yet to be decided. Last year saw 4 applications go to appeal, resulting in 1 appeal being allowed. 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 specific Planning Applications, predominantly the Children's homes and Low Burham Garage, dog fouling and local parking and traffic issues. Parishioners are encouraged to continue to use these opportunities to express their views.

The Foreman Carter Centre and Parish Council Headquarters continues to function satisfactorily as a sports and cultural facility and is the subject of a separate briefing by a member of the Management Committee. This year the Children's play park has been refurbished and improved thanks to grants from NLC and the local Lions. The Parish Council wishes to thank Richard Carter, his Management Committee and the Parish Clerk for their continued hard work and stewardship of the Westwoodside Playing Fields Association on their behalf as Sole Trustees. Notable events this last year were the planting of the 420 saplings around the Playing Fields and the presentation of the

“Hood Tea Urn” by Mrs Bond from Southport. The urn was an heirloom she discovered in her loft and she took the trouble to contact the Parish Council to ask if we would like it returned to its “home”. It now sits proudly in a wooden case in the Parish Council Meeting Room. On infrastructure issues, the Council has been involved with NLC to purchase some land near Haxey School for the provision of a much needed car park. Progress has been made and we expect a result in the near future. The Council has maintained its contacts with the local Housing Association, ONGO and provided more dog and litter bins following requests from Residents. We have liaised with BT to ensure the Parish telephone kiosks are fit for purpose and approved and submitted a design to NLC for new signs for all the Parish Villages and Hamlets. Finally, following considerable dialogue, the Westwoodside Notice Board has now been reduced in height which, we hope, will be to the satisfaction of all?

Liaison with the Haxey Parish Allotment Association has continued over the last year, Cllrs Boor and Whitehead judged the Association’s annual “best kept plot” competitions and Cllr Whitehead presented the trophies to the winners. The Association continues to have all the site plots fully let. In the St Nicholas Closed Churchyard, the tree and memorial surveys remain up to date and this year the path through “God’s Acre” has been refurbished. The Parish Cemetery on Church Lane has continued to be maintained and the commissioning of the cemetery and raising of the necessary administrative

paperwork, which has been put on hold due to Council workload will be completed in due course.

Following the successful “beacon lighting” event to mark the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of HM the Queen last year, the Parish Council has formed a Beacon Working Group which has been tasked with sighting a permanent beacon for the Parish for future events. A site has been identified east of the Water Tower and work is currently in hand to fabricate a beacon and ensure all the necessary regulations are adhered to prior to installation. The Parish Council has already registered for another national beacon event in 2018.

During the last year, the Parish Council has continued to be actively involved in the nationally supported Isle of Axholme, Hatfield Chase Project, which aims to preserve the local heritage and natural assets of our area. As previously reported, we currently have several local schemes in the Project which is now funded and active. The Council’s Heritage Working Group under the Chairmanship of Cllr Carlile has made progress with NLC and the Partnership on our projects. The digitised Parish Documentation Archive is now expected to be hosted on the enhanced Partnership website and a contract is to be let shortly to carry out the refurbishment of the East Lound Pinfold, which should be completed by Christmas. Other projects will be taken forward in due course. The railings around the main War memorial in Haxey have been refurbished thanks to local and NLC funding and further funding is being pursued with NLC, the Partnership and the War Memorials

Trust for the refurbishment/cleaning of both War memorials and other Parish monuments. The Parish Paths Working Group under the Chairmanship of Cllr Smedley has successfully managed last season's Paths and Bridleways contract and the Parish Council has recently let the contract for the coming season's grass cutting. The Westwoodside Playing Fields owned and leased land is now up to date with the Land Registry and the Holm Rd entrance to Westwoodside Playing Fields has finally been registered as Parish Council land.

The Parish Council Web site continues to develop satisfactorily and all Councillors with internet access have now been allocated a functioning Council email address. The Parish Council has registered with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) for their Local Councils Awards Scheme and we will be undergoing an assessment for Foundation Status in the coming weeks. On the training front, the Council resolved to carry out relevant training packages locally rather than travelling for the whole Council and we are working to put this decision into action. Last year the Clerk and some Councillors received training in Code of Conduct, Planning and attended the Local Council Association's Annual Conference. The Parish Council has continued to support the CPRE's Best Kept Village Competitions and following yet another disappointing result, the Council Planting Working Group, has recently arranged for this year's plant and maintenance contract, which will primarily improve the look of the Villages during the Spring and Summer and hopefully enable us to fare better at this year's CPRE Best Kept Village competition. Last year, the Parish Council

established a Local Volunteer Awards Group and following the inaugural award the Council has now resolved to consider making an award every 4th year.

During the last year, the Parish Council has provided financial support to the Royal British Legion, CPRE, Isle of Axholme Physically Handicapped Society, Westwoodside and Haxey Playing Fields, Haxey Tennis Club, East Lound Christmas Lights Committee, Room 21, South Axholme Academy Music Department, St Nicholas Church and the Over 70s Party; moreover, the Council paid NLC and various local contractors for work carried out on its behalf as well as to its internal and external auditors, Insurers, SLCC and ERNLLCA . Other administrative tasks completed included a further review and update of the Community Emergency Plan by Cllr Lange and the production of policies required by National and Local Authorities that are relevant to the safe and lawful operation of the Parish Council including the setting up of a Council Pension Plan. 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 once again passes on their sincere thanks. The Council again 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> 2016 and attendance at the Church Service on the following Sunday. Both events were supported for the sixth year by a local Bugler. Finally, the Council continues to support the Axholme Camera Club and the annual photographic competition results will be announced after this meeting.

Moving on to general items for the coming year: the Parish Council will carry on the work with plans in progress, particularly with the Isle of Axholme, Hatfield Chase project and the management of the Parish Paths and Bridleways initiative. We will continue with direct involvement with Residents and the Principal Authority on any parking and traffic initiatives that emerge to remedy issues at several sites in the Parish and we will also continue to attempt to solve, with other agencies, the “nuisance animal” problems currently being experienced in the area. Finally, we will continue to develop our relationships with the Principal Authority on all fronts and also keep abreast of any developments in local Hydro-carbon activity and national legislation aimed at greater devolution.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Finally, I would like 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**