

## **Chairman's Report for the Annual Meeting of**

### **Waterperry with Thomley Parish Council,**

**24<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

In my annual report last year, I ran through some of the roles and responsibilities of a Parish Council. What I wanted to get across in that report, was that our role is to serve residents and to tackle issues that have a direct impact on the village and wider parish.

We meet approximately every 6 weeks, and during those meetings, if someone makes us aware of an issue of concern in the village, then we are obliged to discuss it. Apart from looking at planning applications on which we are a Consultee, other matters typically on our Agenda in the last year have included the Recreation Ground, mowing the verges, updates on Broadband, and problems such as dog-fouling, litter, over-hanging hedges, speeding and such like. As I said last year, there may be different views on the importance of these things, but it is our responsibility to discuss them and to take appropriate action.

Our largest annual expense is for the mowing of the Rec and the wide village verge; we also arrange insurance for the recreation ground and for public liability at community events and in parish public spaces; we replace or renew equipment when needed; there are also basic costs for accounts audits; hosting the website; contributions to village events and so on. This leaves a small balance that is carried over each year to hopefully accumulate to be spent on new projects. Our accounts are available for anyone to examine, either on the website, or by asking Adrian for a copy.

This last year hasn't seen much obvious extra activity or expenditure by the Parish Council, but those essential things have still been done. I'd like to thank Adrian for being an extremely diligent and organised Clerk and for being that constant presence on my shoulder, or in my Inbox, nagging – sorry, reminding – me, about the things we need to do. He isn't salaried, but the PC pays him a modest 'compensation', which he chooses each year to donate in full to either local causes or charity. He carries out all his responsibilities in his 'spare time' – often staying late in his office, or going into work at the weekend, to use the faster broadband (!) to send out Agendas & Minutes for our meetings. So, one big improvement in that area is that he has recently taken advantage of a Transparency Code grant that has allowed us to purchase a PC and scanner/printer for his use, to facilitate the publishing & circulation of PC documents. Once he gets his superfast Gigaclear broadband in action, he'll be able to do all that work at home. It might be debateable whether that's a good thing!

One initiative that Adrian has actively encouraged and championed this year, is the provision of a community defibrillator, to be installed in our phone kiosk. I'm sure everyone has noticed them springing up in villages around us and organisations such as the British Heart Foundation and the NHS support their use as potentially meaning the difference between life or death in heart failure emergencies. Adrian found out about grants available that would enable us to go ahead with this project without needing to fundraise within the village. He and I submitted the applications a couple of months ago. We have to wait for official notice and cannot publicise anything yet, but the indications are that we have been successful in our grant application and will be able to get things underway very soon. This matter is on tonight's agenda for further discussion.

Now that Gigaclear has finally, more-or-less, completed installation work in the village, we can turn to a couple of other projects that the PC has initiated. Firstly, posts to protect the

village verges: these were purchased a few weeks ago and our hope was that the Gigaclear contractors would install these in the verges as they refilled their trenches. This was what was informally agreed at a site meeting before work started. Unfortunately, as we all know, the project did not run smoothly and we had, I think, 4 or 5 teams on the job, with something of a lack of coordination, so this post installation didn't happen. Again, this subject is on the agenda for us to talk about.

Back in December, I spoke to our local PCSO about conducting a traffic speed survey in the village. This was put on hold when the Gigaclear project looked like materialising, as we knew the road works and barriers would obviously slow traffic for a few weeks. Now that the installation is complete, this subject is on the agenda for further planning tonight.

There are new projects for this year that could be deemed to be important to our village; both are on tonight's agenda. Firstly, Oxfordshire CC actively encourage town & parish councils to organise and submit an Emergency Plan. I know we generally live a fairly safe and uneventful life, but unforeseen emergencies do happen – it could be long term power cuts, flooding, heavy snow – and the idea of these plans is that we identify vulnerable people in our community and arrange how we would coordinate communication amongst ourselves and with the local authorities to enable swift aid and support.

Secondly, as some of you know, a few years ago a committee was formed to generate our Village Plan. We are now encouraged by SODC to formulate a Neighbourhood Plan. This can be based on the original Village Plan, but is a more detailed document, considering public issues like transport, employment and particularly looking at the community view on development in the village. We all know there is huge pressure on SODC to provide thousands of new houses over the next few years, and the Neighbourhood Plan gives a community the chance to identify how much, and where, new developments could be accommodated in our parish. It carries some weight in the planning process and could be helpful in considering the future expansion of the village.

The thing I have noticed in the last couple of years is that we now have a thriving number of young families in the village, which is a great opportunity for change and improvement. But don't forget, all those young families have chosen to come to live here, in a small village, presumably attracted by the relative peace and quiet, surrounded by farmland and countryside – so my appeal for the future is for people to come forward and be part of these village projects, to protect and improve our village character. There's always room for change – some of us here have been on the PC for several years now and I am the first to admit we can become stale and complacent. There is definitely room for fresh ideas and enthusiasm, so come on – step up to the challenge and think about doing your bit, actively, for the benefit of everyone.

Thank you to my colleague councillors and our clerk and to all of you, for coming along this evening - please use this opportunity to chat to us and your neighbours and to give us a direction for future initiatives.