

Impington Parish Council - Chairman's report

17th May 2010 - 24th May 2011

On behalf of Impington Parish Council I'd like to welcome everyone to this Annual Parish Meeting.

This is a first - a joint meeting with Histon Parish Council. The Councils recognise that whilst we are two villages, with two Parish Councils, we are one community - and as we look forward, we need to plan and think more as one community.

As a report on the year, I have to note that its 117 years since the Parish Councils were created - and, despite, or perhaps because of, our age, we're as relevant as ever, and about to be given more powers by Central Government.

More recent history sees this as being the 14th year of my Chairmanship of the Council. I thank my fellow Councillors for their ongoing vote of confidence, and look forward to serving them, and the community, during the coming year.

14 years is a long time as Chairman, though both Parishes have records of Chairmen serving for even longer. However, members of our staff have been with us even longer, and Steve Campin, who continues to ensure that our Recreation Ground is one of the best, has been with us for 30 years - thank you, Steve.

Last year I looked back, and picked a number of things that ought to have happened - or at least have been making real progress. That list included: the City/South Cambridgeshire Boundary Review, the Guided Bus, NIAB Extra, Northstowe and the A14.

They are all still happening, but when we will be able to say "they've happened" is another matter.

The pessimists are still doubtful about the Guided Bus, but the County are forecasting fare paying passengers in August - and it would be great to have it working for the start of school term in September - let us hope so!



I also mentioned the Unwins development last year - and the first residents moved into Merrington Place earlier this year. Merrington Place has been a success also for the relationship that we've established with the developers. At least partly as a result, some improvements that we've sought are included in the second phase that is expected to start building shortly.

As with all new housing developments, the community also benefits financially - developers making appropriate contributions towards open space, formal play provision and community facilities. This income will be welcomed and put to good use.

In terms of new buildings, I have to mention a small, but significant one - the re-sited Crossing Keeper's Hut. The efforts by the team led by Pene Nudds cannot have gone unnoticed - it's been a tremendous amount of hard work. Apart from our thanks, Pene also got an Arts Award from South Cambridgeshire Council earlier this year.

The Hut is not just recreated history - it's been the focus for a number of events - the community coming together to celebrate - at both Christmas and Easter. The Christmas celebration was in bitter cold, but greatly appreciated, and had some magical lighting in the Copse.

The enviro volunteers were part of that team, but their considerable efforts can be seen across the village, and we thank them, and Pene, for their work improving our environment.

The joint Committee running the Recreation Ground has also been putting in a great deal of hard work. Long overdue renovation of the groundsman's house has been carried out, and a new outdoor gym and perimeter path installed - and due to the hard work of the team, without any capital investment by the Councils.

Much of the work of that Committee, and the Council in general, is "business as usual", maintenance of property and grounds, responding to queries from residents, looking at development plans, working with District and County Councils on issues that affect our community.

And that's not just the great team that we have in the office, it's also Councillors, and a small number of members of the public co-opted to individual committees.

In the year, therefore, it's been sad to say goodbye to Vanessa Kelly, and also finally to Trevor Silk, who had been co-opted to our Environment Committee.

We've co-opted three Councillors during the year - Paul Manser, Neil Davies and Max Parish. It is unusual to have two such prominent members (Max, Neil) from Histon Parish Council (and Histon village) on Impington Council but their contribution and willingness to serve has been welcome.

We remain two Councillors down on our full complement, and would welcome hearing from anyone interested in the role, or in co-option to specific committees.

The work involved in making some things happen - such as the events around the Crossing Keeper's Hut, cannot be underestimated. We therefore take our hats off to the Mill Road residents who organised their Royal Wedding Street Party. It's great to know that the community spirit is still alive and kicking, and getting in practice for the Jubilee Celebrations next year.

Needless to say, of course, there are a group of residents working up plans for that major celebration - you'll probably know many of them, and there are Councillors amongst the team.

I mentioned last year the experiment of employing two youngsters under the Future Jobs Fund (FJF). Tom, who'd been working with the grounds team, moved on last October, but stays in touch. Chelsea has been taken on as part of the office team. She's making a significant difference, and is a real success for the FJF idea - it's a great pity that it's no longer operating.

Chelsea's contribution has, for example, allowed Angela to take the lead to get Impington's Quality Status renewed - and we welcomed Steve Wilkinson to our February meeting to present the paperwork.

Looking forward - what's in the wind:

Firstly, tonight marks the start of a consultation on the possible joining of the two Parish Councils. Whilst Impington Council believes that this is the right thing to do - they have explicitly said that that is dependent on the views of residents. So, we want to hear from you. Leaflets will shortly be distributed to all households, and we look forward to getting your views.

We've also recently agreed to make the major contribution to the funding of the "Older People's Co-ordinator" - a role that will develop over time and we hope make a real difference to the older people in the community.

We continue to face the challenge of maintaining the village's sustainability - and trying to stop it turning into just a commuter town. There are two business sites up for conversion to housing - and we will do all we can to maintain employment opportunities in the village, but also to work with developers to ensure the best quality of developments for future residents.

We know that the District Council will be looking again at housing allocations - and will work with them to focus on the sustainability that the Government is demanding.

And then, as we have just heard, there is the Localism Bill, and the Big Society. Whatever the names, there are big changes ahead, and the Council will focus on bringing the benefits to the community, and minimising any negative impacts. We will actively seek to work in partnership for the good of Impington.

I'll close by thanking Councillors doing such a splendid job, particularly when our numbers are down. I am personally grateful for the support of the Vice-Chairman, Brian Ing, who has been able to represent the Council at day time events when work commitments limit the availability of most Councillors. I'd also like to thank the Councillors from the rest of the local government family that work for our residents along side us - Councillors Chatfield, Mason and Stonham at District and Gymer and Jenkins at County.

Last but not least I'd like to thank our staff Angela, Chelsea, Lynda, Steve, Terry and Trevor - without whom we'd not be able to do anything!

*Denis W Payne
24th May 2011*