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Annual Report May 2016



Environment Committee

The Environment Committee met on seven occasions over the past year, dealing with issues as wide-ranging as ever, from fencing to footpaths, from litter to Christmas lights, from allotments to the adoption of a telephone box. In addressing these matters so cogently, my thanks go to all members of the Committee, but especially to Cedric Foster and Pene Nudds, both of whom took over the chair at particular meetings when I was unable to attend. I should also like to welcome Aga Cahn and Ashley Gordon as new members, both of whom have already offered fresh perspectives on key topics. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the enormous contribution made over the years to the work of the Committee by the late John Dunn, whose perception and advice, especially on matters such as footpaths and drainage, played such an important part in our deliberations.

Whilst some issues take longer to resolve than others, Committee discussions result in important outcomes that contribute to the life of the villages, and it is appropriate here to identify just some of them. An encouraging level of activity, for example, has been reported at the two Parish Council allotment sites at Gatehouse Road and Glebe Way; in both cases, the plots have been made more accessible - at Gatehouse Road, for example, a clear haulage way has been cut. The Sustainability Group, in particular, has established a team of volunteers who are currently taking on two plots after considerable success with just one last year. Residents of Kings Meadow have welcomed the significant improvements to their public green areas that have recently been carried out by the Council's contractors. Near St Audrey's Close, a long line of rather ugly concrete fence posts, left redundant by the construction of the Busway, has finally been removed, making the adjacent footpath more pleasant to walk along. Grass reinforcements have been put in to protect sensitive locations at both the Green and South Road Play Area; and in Milton Road, a decaying BT telephone box has been adopted by the Council for renovation and re use.

Other projects, of course, take longer to come to fruition, often because of procedural complexities, contractor availability or unforeseen circumstances. Whilst it has been a relatively straightforward matter to raise awareness of dog fouling problems by increasing signage around the villages, or to improve footpath access to Manor Park field by clearing away the mounds of soil build-up, the erection of estate railings at Homefield Park and the promotion of greater biodiversity through the development of wildflower verges are challenges that can be met only over a period of time. Nevertheless, the Homefield Park fence is firmly expected to be completed in the coming year, whilst the Sustainability Group has already begun the process of improving our verges at four specific locations. Other initiatives are also ready to bring about significant improvements in the coming year. The 'Adopt a Road' scheme, for instance, is now firmly in place, firstly to prevent litter from lying around in our roads for long periods of time, but also to ensure that problems such as those associated with blocked drains, overgrown hedges or pot holes are effectively reported. In addition, advantage has been taken of generous support from the Woodland Trust in order to increase the number of trees that will enhance our precious open spaces.

It is in those open spaces where, perhaps, the greatest pressures for the Environment Committee lie in the future. On the one hand, one may see them as places to enjoy precisely because of their 'openness', not to be compromised by the demands of 'community' or even 'commercial' usage; or they may be regarded as assets which, in times of austerity, must pay for themselves at the very least. The answer, as always, is likely to be in finding some sort of balance: if they are empty of community activity, they become neglected and forgotten; if they are opened to indiscriminate commercial exploitation, their natural openness will be lost forever. Perhaps the best model of something 'in between', which has become a standard for the very best in community initiative, is the community orchard at Manor Park field. Anyone leading future projects should first refer to this beautifully established facility, yielding all sorts of rewards to those who take care of it and those who come to relax within its bounds, not the least of which are the apples that will hopefully be gleaned for generations to come.

Derek Marston

Chairman, Environment Committee

Finance, Legal and Administration Committee

The critical successes of the Finance Committee are not immediately visible. They revolve around meeting our legal and accounting requirements and the setting of appropriate budgets and effective financial management so that the operational committees of the Council can deliver their plans.

The work of the office team, with input from our internal auditor, has regularly ensured that our accounts pass audit with flying colours. Necessary oversight and checks are provided by Councillors.

The committee are grateful that Max Parish has continued to fulfil the role of internal auditor. He has again done an excellent job.

As forecast, no “planning gain” cash has come in since the ending of the S106 arrangements. And with CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) dependent on the completion of the Local Plan processes, no contributions towards open space and community facilities are expected for some time, probably not until sometime during the next financial year, 2017 - 2018.

The District Council believes that, by appropriate efficiency measures, sharing services and prudent investments it will be able to maintain services and will not be delegating anything to Parishes. However, the County Council has made it clear that it expects communities to step forward and assist in filling some of the gaps left by the reduction in services it has to make as its funding is cut.

The Parish Council has therefore continued to build its community fund, but is also working closely with County Council staff to explore opportunities for partnership working that will save money, and provide an equal or better service. This work is effectively increasing the understanding on both sides of possibilities, and is expected to be the basis, longer term, of models applicable to all Cambridgeshire Parishes.

For the first time, the Parish Council undertook a broad level consultation with the community on spending levels and support for potential Council Tax increases. The results were incredibly useful - indicating support for spending increases in four out of five areas. And, whilst there was an understandable vote for zero Parish Council Tax increases, vote for larger increases showed confidence in the Council’s work. The Council has agreed that this will now become part of its standard processes.

The plans brought forward by committees for revenue spend (i.e. “day to day” running costs, in some cases “year to year” spend spread by the use of small payments into funds) did not present any overall increase. However, a number of possible revenue items have been handled as capital because of uncertainties. Two of these are worthy of note:

- Elections. 2016-2017 marks the first election of Histon & Impington Parish Council. Should a poll be necessary, the District Council would levy a charge of £4,000 per parish - a potential total of £8,000. However, no poll at a Parish election has been held since the 1970s, so this has been set as an item to be funded from reserves, rather than put on precept.
- Neighbourhood Plan. The work on the Neighbourhood Plan continues. It is vital both to guide the Council in its work, but also is likely to be financially justifiable because of an increased percentage of the CIL charge on new development coming to the Council once a plan is in place. Funding is available from a variety of sources, but the budget is yet to be finalised, and may well be spread over two years. This is also to be funded from reserves.

The Council has also committed to the employment of an apprentice to work on grounds maintenance. This continues the work of the Council in supporting young people who want to get into work. Even after the increased costs arising from National Insurance and Pension changes the Council was able to put together a balanced budget with a Band D increase of just 2% - £1.84, or just 3½p per week.

Key objectives for 2016-2017 include:

- 1) continuing to working with committees to ensure that projects and spending plans are effectively delivered and met through the year
- 2) continuing to manage investments prudently whilst maximising returns
- 3) putting in place effective mechanisms to ensure that capital spend proposals are thoroughly presented for decision

Denis Payne

Chairman, Finance, Legal and Administration Committee

Youth Committee

This year has seen yet another change for the way the Parish Council delivers youth work within the villages. After a successful period of secondment last year, our youth worker Andrea Cowley was employed directly by the Parish Council for 12 months. This enabled us to continue and consolidate the projects and activities started last year. The committee's work has, as a result, evolved from planning and commissioning activities to one of management and oversight with Andrea taking on the responsibility for identifying what is needed and making it happen within the constraints of her working hours and the youth budget. Over the course of the year, as Andrea has settled into her new role, with line management and support provided by the Clerk and the office staff, the youth committee was disbanded. The council appointed the chair of the youth committee as the youth liaison officer to maintain a close link between the council and the youth worker.

Throughout all this administrative change youth work has continued without a hiccup. The junior youth club is continuing to run on a Monday during term time and the popular short courses covering "babysitting", food hygiene and first aid are consistently over-subscribed. Andrea has even been able to match up families with newly trained babysitters.

Andrea has continued to work with the church youth workers and IVC on the joint projects started last year:

- helping students cope with the transition from year 6 at HJS to year 7 at IVC
- Crafternoon – arts and crafts sessions with sales to support local community events, though this has now finished
- lunch time walk-about sessions at IVC – making herself available for all students who need help or advice or just a friendly face to talk to

Additionally Andrea has initiated another successful project as a result of her involvement in the Mental Well-being initiative: the mindfulness and teenage yoga sessions have been particularly popular and we would like to thank Pauline Reay for working with us to make these possible.

A new opportunity for older students was trialled during the autumn term but wasn't successful; undeterred, the format and location were changed and Andrea launched the **Youth Bar** in February. This is in collaboration with Histon Football Club and has proved to be successful, so much so that it will continue to run throughout the summer term. Our thanks go to the management team at HFC for making their space available for us to use.

Engagement with our young people continues to be a challenge. During the year we started and closed a youth working party initiative – we got a couple of positive and keen young people attending one or two sessions but found it difficult to maintain a sufficient level of engagement. Other initiatives to increase communication and awareness include our regular page in the quarterly parish newsletter which shares a name with our Facebook page [HI Youth Noticeboard](#). The Facebook page is new this year and gets a moderate

level of traffic. If you haven't "liked" it yet then please do so. All information about current and new activities is posted here by Andrea.

On a less positive note we have had issues with young people leaving a lot of rubbish, including broken glass after gatherings on the Recreation ground. Andrea has been working with the Groundsman, IVC and our PCSO to combat this.

Looking forward to the next 12 months Andrea has already got plans for three exciting new projects – an inter-generational project; a series of outdoor environmental activities and some self-defence classes. The council will be looking at ways to secure youth provision in partnership with other village providers.

I would like to thank Andrea for her commitment and enthusiasm for our young people over the past year. However, youth work is a team effort and there are a number of people who work with or otherwise support Andrea and help her to deliver our vision for youth. So a big thank also to

- our youth workers Debbie Orton and Dan Benstead and our volunteer youth worker Lisa Hill for their commitment to the junior youth club
- all the office staff for their support
- other members of the youth committee
- staff at IVC for their willingness to work with us; and
- our local PCSO Tony Martin.

I shall be stepping down from the council this year, but shall watch with interest how youth work develops over the next year.

Hooda Abdullah
Chairman, Youth Committee

Highways Committee

The last year, the fifth of my Chairmanship, though one of those was as part of Histon Parish Council has been of mixed success.

Looking back to a year ago, the St Andrew's Centre project had just been completed, and seems to have improved the area - slowing traffic approaching the bend; providing cycle & assigned disabled parking; making crossing the road easier and stopping obstructive across residents' drives.

Successes during the year include the installation of a zebra crossing which was a hot topic when I first joined Histon Parish Council and has been ever since; and only came about by the right question being asked at the right time. Tying in the new streetlight with the belisha beacon and the provision of a cowl has softened its impacted, which is important in such a sensitive area as The Green.

More recently the final phase of this work, which included the narrowing of the splay at the mouth of Station Road and the tidying of the kerb outside The Coop, the straightening of the curve by the crossing has just happened. This should make parking easier and return some area to The Green for everyone's benefit.

At the same time work from the 'Local Highways Initiative' has happened, most obviously the kerbing outside the Cambridge Building Society has been tidied, encouraging crossing at safer points elsewhere. Some dropped kerbs at Home Close should make that area more navigable for pedestrians and those less mobile. The bus stop at The Barley Mow is due to be swapped with the 2 parking spaces, but more work is required for both the Real Time Bus Information to be moved, and sorting out the legal work behind the

bus stop and parking restrictions. A new bus stop by the entrance to Winders Lane should keep traffic moving in that area.

Also recently double yellow lines have gone in down one side of New Road to help prevent gridlock down there during events - it is relatively rare for someone to park on that side otherwise. This also has the effect of restricting parking on the verge. It has become apparent that events based in the New Road area (IVC, The Rec, the football club) require proper marshalling even with the double yellow lines - if you are involved in planning such an event please do contact the Parish Council so as to advise.

On the down side for the year a similar project to put double yellow lines on the section of Cambridge Road by the windmill was eventually rejected. Part of the concern was the amount of ever-increasing parking there which would then be displaced. There already seems to be a large influx of vehicles parking in this area - The Crescent, a fair way up Villa Road and even College Road - to access both the Busway and the Citi 8, though this service was heavily degraded during the year. Similar problems are being seen elsewhere in the county after the introduction of parking charges at what should be the proper Park & Ride sites. We are also seeing problems in the car park off the High Street, as well as in the Baptist Church area.

The biggest disappointment for the year was the rejection of our application for funding under the coming year's Local Highways Initiative to rework the Baptist Church area. Despite us presenting a very strong case centered on safety and encouraging non-vehicle school runs which included numerous emails of support from residents a panel of County Councillors (ours excluded) scored us surprisingly low. Rumbling along in the background, literally and metaphorically, has been the A14 and the scheme to reroute it from Huntingdon. Work is due to commence late this year or early next, assuming that the Development Consent Order is successful. A lot of time has gone in to engagement in the process and extracting a fairer deal for our community; residents at the southern end have had to put up with a lot for many years.

Looking forward, plans have started to be drawn up for some funding secured under the Northern Corridor Initiative, with projects to look at both the junction at The Green, as well as the approach to the A14 roundabout. The 20mph project, now called 20iMPHis has progressed a little slowly, but is now coming back in to focus with a consultation due soon. Other projects include consulting on replicating the restrictions up the Junior School in the area of the Infant School and Early Years Centre.

Lastly, a number of sites have been identified for cycle racks, but the project has stalled in getting them installed, we hope to bring those forward in the coming year.

David Legge
Chairman, Highways Committee

Planning Committee

The Planning Committee have met 20 times this year and considered 47 plans for Impington, 55 for Histon and 6 for elsewhere, including Darwin Green (Impington/City south of the A14), Orchard Park and Longstanton. Of these, we recommended approval of 56, refusal of 19, no objection to 14, 11 were for information only. No comments were submitted on 6 for a variety of reasons, including where the application was from the Council itself, or where it was from a Parish Councillor.

The team of Councillors responsible for commenting on these plans were: Denis Payne, Marcus Dann, Brian Ing, Marian Cleaver, Josephine Teague, David Legge, John Dunn and Christine Hertoghe. David Jenkins and Cedric Foster are ex-officio members of the Committee.

Marcus Dann chaired the Committee until September when he resigned from Council having left the area. We also, sadly, lost John Dunn who had been a regular attendee and provider of expert advice on drainage up to his passing. In the second half of the year the Committee was joined by Aga Cahn. In addition, thanks are due to Chelsea Presland, Clerk to the Committee, for her commitment to ensuring the smooth running of the processes involved.

The Parish Council is a consultee on all planning matters affecting the parishes, as a consultee the Planning Committee makes a recommendation based on the plans provided. The final decision is with South Cambridgeshire District Council. When responding to applications, the Committee tries to ensure that the character and local history is maintained. Key issues the Committee usually comment on are parking provision, character of the street and loss of amenity to neighbouring properties (this often means loss of light).

All meetings are open to the public. We welcome both applicants and those with views on applications to attend meetings and take part. If a planning application affects you, we encourage you to make your views known to the planning authority, SCDC (South Cambridgeshire District Council) and the Parish Council.

As well as attending fortnightly Committee meetings, members also attend Northstowe Forum and public meetings, SCDC Planning Appeals and Local Plan Hearings. Members continue to attend SCDC Liaison Sessions and the Parish Planning Forum.

As part of our commitment to work with applicants, a significant number of meetings have been held with the developers of the Station Area - i.e. Bishops, Histon Station and the Clark Brothers' yard. The locally co-ordinated plan between three separate developers is a "first", and we look forward to the formal planning applications in due course.

The Committee has continued to respond to consultations throughout the year, with much of the work being done by members and the clerk prior to being reviewed and approved at a meeting. Responses were submitted to these consultations: County Farm Estates, SCDC Delegated Decision, SCDC Local Plan and Northern Fringe East Area Action Plan.

It has been a very busy year for Planning Committee and I would like to record my thanks to Committee members for their contributions and regular attendance at meetings, and look forward to working with the newly elected members next year.

Denis Payne
Chairman, Planning Committee

Recreation Committee

The Committee has spent much of its time in the last 12 months focussing on a number of specific projects and ensuring they have been delivered in a cost effective way and successfully.

The replacement of the old Cricket practice nets has been a priority for a number of years and the Rec Committee has worked closely with Histon Cricket Club on the project. The old nets were becoming a health and safety concern and have now been replaced by a new double bay cricket net practice facility. The £30k was funded by the Parish Council and a third of the cost was met by the Cricket Club, Friends of the Rec and other community fundraising. The new net facility will be officially opened by the former

England test batsman Graham Thorpe on Wednesday 13th July followed by a celebration dinner as part of the 2016 Rec Summer Festival.

The Safety netting for the Rec play area and bowls green has now been fully erected and is now beginning to blend into the Recreation Ground landscape. This work was done following an increase in the number of cricket balls entering the play area and bowls green and the recommendation from a professional health and safety review that work is carried out.

This year is the 5th anniversary of completion of the Rec play area redevelopment project and over the last few months a thorough review of the play area has been undertaken. The play area has been a victim of its own success with huge usage over recent years and the mound in particular has showed signs of erosion. The refurbishment of the mound has now been completed and the contractor has shown an imaginative approach in its work. The area around the sail area seats will now be the next focus.

The provision of new floodlit artificial grass tennis courts remains a long term aspiration but first a new drainage attenuation outlet is required for the rec car park area.

The refurbishment of the multi-use games area is a high priority but the right decision about the replacement surface needs to be made. We are acutely aware that a decision needs to be made this summer and work completed in the autumn.

With the very recent provision of new yellow lines in New Road car parking at the Recreation Ground will come under more pressure and some radical decisions may need to be taken.

2016 is the tenth anniversary of completion of the Recreation Ground redevelopment and is being celebrated by the 2016 Rec Summer Festival in July organised by Friends of the Rec and there are some really exciting events- full information www.hisimpfotr.co.uk

The Parish Council can feel that the original investment in the Rec development project has produced good dividends with an additional 250 people of all ages using the rec every week now and the Rec is a high quality community facility.

Neil Davies
Recreation Committee Chairman

Histon & Impington Mobile Warden Scheme

The Mobile Warden Scheme is designed to help older people who may need some support, to live at home independently, for as long as possible. The warden keeps in contact with clients by regular visits and phone calls. She helps in practical ways, such as shopping or collecting pensions, giving help with forms or putting them in touch with other agencies, as well as providing much needed personal and moral support.

This scheme is working well in our villages. It is funded by contributions from the County Council, the District Council, the Parish Council and the contributions paid for the service by the clients. It is managed very efficiently for us, at the moment, by Age UK, although their contract comes up for renewal in November 2016. If the contract for running the Mobile Warden Scheme is awarded to another organisation our warden's employment would be protected under the TUPE regulations.

We are very fortunate in still having Mrs Gillian Berry, a village resident, as warden. She has a good

working relationship with Jean Newman, the Older Persons' Co-Ordinator, the Firs House Surgery and those who run the Mini-bus and the Day Centre. This means that she is often informed of people who might need her services and others learn of the scheme by word of mouth. Currently, her contracted number of clients is 17 but a flexible arrangement is in place to allow her to take on additional clients. At the moment she has 24 clients on her books but 4 of these are couples in the same household, so she has 22 households under her care. A mild winter meant that there were fewer critical issues during the colder weather but bed-blocking was still a problem at Addenbrookes and there were incidents of patients sent home with insufficient warning and inadequate care in place. Some care agencies will not take on social care. This is becoming an increasing problem as the number of vulnerable older people grows.

At the moment the Histon and Impington scheme has a healthy financial balance and funding is available for these additions but it will be necessary in the coming year for the Parish Council to increase its funding contribution. However, it is clear that numbers of those needing the service are rising, gradually, but steadily. It is unlikely that two wardens would be funded by the scheme and we should be aware, that if the need arises, the Parish Council might have to meet the increased costs.

The Link Committee for the scheme is comprised of the Age UK Co-ordinator, the Mobile Warden, The Older Persons' Co-ordinator, two representatives appointed by the Parish Council and two village residents.

Marian Cleaver

Mobile Warden Scheme Representative

This year the following members from Council moved on:

Marcus Dann – Marcus moved away from Histon but had previously enjoyed his time Chairing the Planning Committee, no mean feat with fortnightly meetings and all the work involved between meetings

Shaun Lindsay – Shaun joined the Council having previously been one of our Winter Gritting volunteers, clearing paths and salting during times of heavy snow and frost. Work commitments meant he had to resign from Council this year

Ruth Moulder – Ruth is known around the village for her passion for sustainability issues, and although she did not stand for Council at the May election she intends to continue her work in that area in Histon and Impington. She is heavily involved in the project to create wildflower verges this year

Hooda Abdullah – Hooda also decided not to stand for election this year, after an amazing 17 year period on Impington Parish Council, then on the grouped Council from 2012. Her commitment to youth projects has been fantastic during all that time, and she has agreed to stay on as our Youth Liaison Officer for the time being. She also hopes to continue as a member of our Community Park Project Working Party

Derek Marston - Derek has been a Councillor for nearly 7 years and made the decision not to stand for election this time round. He has very ably steered the Environment Committee through a number of projects in recent years and now looks forward to spending more time with family

Some of the photographs used in this report were supplied by Barry Starling, resident of Histon