

Chairman's Report for May 2022

Welcome.

It was so good to commence our new financial year emerging from the pandemic and to once again be able to hold face to face meetings, though heart breaking that at the end of it we are witnessing the devastation and pain caused by war in Ukraine. So as you read this report I ask that you take a moment to think about all's those innocent people suffering because of this unnecessary conflict. One can only hope that peace will come sooner rather than later!

As councillors we always do our utmost to ensure that the budget is used wisely and appropriately and consider any expenditure regarding improvements and maintenance carefully to ensure that they are beneficial and offer best value. It is our ultimate aim to foster greater public participation in our budget decisions and to cultivate greater community cohesion.

Our total income for the year was **£34,373.05**, including our precept of **£15,000**. Our total expenditure was **£40,702.14 net of VAT**. All our accounts can be viewed on our website and are now printed on our minutes.

During the last year we replaced our old noticeboard, which was no longer fit for purpose with a far more appropriate one sited outside 'Post 'n' More'. I'm pleased to report that our old one has been recycled by BAGS. We installed two new pieces of play equipment to provide a more diverse play experience to our younger residents and also repaired the wet pour to ensure their continuing safety, we installed a plaque at Spring Wells to thank all those that contributed to its refurbishment and signage to encourage the correct feeding of our waterfowl and installed our VE Day remembrance bench. We also undertook all necessary remedial tree work and painted the benches in our cemetery.

Alongside all this we continued to carry out all our usual grass cutting and general maintenance works.

However; we considered that the Spring Wells area and the Cemetery grass needed a little more help than was being provided by the general grass cutting contractor. So to ensure that these areas always look their best we advertised for a caretaker for Spring Wells and an independent grass cutter for the cemetery and were very lucky to have Karen and Jon join our team. Karen's

hard work has greatly improved the Spring Wells area, as has Jon's at the cemetery with both areas bringing many comments of approval.

We had planned to revamp our cemetery entrance, however; these works have been deferred to the new financial year and our plans for new village name signs at all three entrances to village deferred until 2023/24, though we will be working on their design and costings this year. Our aim for this financial year is for it to be one of recuperation.

In order that the Council runs more efficiently we also updated some of our computerised administrative systems, financial procedures and website.

Unfortunately we still have ongoing problems in the village with illegal parking and speeding, though I'm pleased to report that our installation of a speed awareness camera on the Horbling entrance to the village has had a dramatic effect on reducing the speed at which vehicles pass by the school. To further address speeding we are currently in the process of setting up a Community Speed awareness scheme. Initially this will be administered by the Council and manned by both councillors and volunteers from the village, though our aim is for the scheme to eventually be managed by a bank of village volunteers independent of the Council. So if you're interested in being part of this please let us know and we'll arrange for you to attend the appropriate training.

We decided after careful consideration not to pursue the possibility of extending the double yellow lines leading up to the school but went ahead with the competition for the school children to design a poster re inappropriate parking and the winning entry has been printed for use.

We are still pursuing LCC to take ownership of all our jitties which are so desperately in need of repair and refurbishment.

With the tenacity of our clerk and help of Cllr Hill extensive works were undertaken by LCC to rectify the flooding of West Street car park which appears to date to have made a significant difference, though unfortunately not fully rectified it.

I can also happily report that anti-social behaviour has substantially declined over the last year.

Unfortunately; the housing plans for the old Aveland School site remain at a standstill and the delay in developing the area has resulted in it becoming totally

neglected and looking an absolute eye saw. We have challenged LCC about this and have been advised that they will look at tidying it up.

We also still have no date as to when the playing field will be officially transferred to us. Though we have had permission to develop it as an educational nature/woodland area, which we consider will be beneficial to the village. We will in the coming months consult the village about this.

Looking to the future, we have commenced negotiations with Crown Estates (CE), regarding us taking over the 'Hall Field', which is located between the village hall and Low Street. Our vision is to transform it from a neglected paddock to a place of beauty by developing it as a community garden in celebration of our Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Many years ago this field was used by the village for fetes and events and was maintained by farmer Harry Brown more as his garden than a field. So it would be good to see it cared for once again to provide pleasure for you and appropriate habitat for wildlife. Once we have confirmation of the terms and conditions on which CE would be happy for us to take over the field, we will of course consult with the village as to whether to proceed or not and if it's a yes, then how best to do this. Our aim is to fully involve the village in its development, design and future.

We currently have our full complement of Councillors though during the year we had some movement, as we lost two councillors and welcomed three new ones. To all of them I say thank you for giving up their time and expertise and for working diligently for the village.

I'd also like to thank all those that have helped or contributed to the upkeep and improvement of the village but especially to:-

Kim our dedicated community village cleaner, who does an amazing job, going above and beyond her job description, to **Mark** our recreation ground caretaker, who ensures its upkeep and security 364 days of the year and who recently undertook training to enable him to take on the responsibility of checking our play equipment on a weekly basis, to **Jane** and **Jon** our cemetery caretaking team who have worked miracles and who ensure that our one business is presentable at all times and to **Karen** our Spring Wells angel - who's made such an incredible difference to whole area in her short time in post - all of them do an incredible job! **So Thank You!!**

To **BAGS** - for managing the allotments on our behalf.

To the **Cricket Club** for providing a sporting opportunity within the village and who are working towards facilitating 'Village Cricket', which would offer an introduction to cricket for ages 5 to 18, with coaching by ECB qualified coaches.

To **Kirsty** who helped with the village entrance planters and to **Mr & Mrs Wright** who help maintain the SW's ones.

To **Geoff** who kindly stored our VE Day bench for many months for us prior to its installation.

To the **Village Hall Committee** for managing the hall and working diligently to raise funds to maintain and improve it and for organising events that aim to foster community cohesion.

To the **Community Gym committee** for managing the gym and ensuring it's continued viability.

To all those that help deliver the weekly '**Pop in Too**' coffee/lunch session. Since this opened in July last year it has flourished and is now a weekly date in so many people's diaries.

To **Linkwell** - whose volunteers provide assistance to those who may at times need a little extra help.

Finally but certainly **not least** to our **Clerk and RFO Hayley!** No words can fully express our gratitude to her, she's just amazing! So **Thank You** Hayley for all your hard work!! You are an **absolute treasure!! THANK YOU!!**

Remember - this is your village so please let us know what you'd like to see being developed or initiated, what we could do better or what we've done well. We are here to serve you and will always endeavour to be responsive to and supportive of village issues, so please let us know your ideas and opinions. We can't change or do something if we don't know about it.

Let's all work together to make Billingborough an even better place to live!

Kind regards

Cllr Chris Woodhead

