

Chairman's Report April 2016 – 2017

I'd like to welcome everyone to this the 2017 Annual Parish Meeting.

Firstly I'd like to thank the Clerk, Wendy for her support throughout the last twelve months, a wealth of knowledge, she works tirelessly for the good of the council and village as a whole. Also my fellow councillors for their support and enthusiasm.

I would now like to cover the past twelve months highlighting the successes and issues that have been dealt with by your councillors. This has been achieved with the continued help and support from residents, whilst very rarely not reaching the desired results, I can assure you every effort and avenue is explored to reach a satisfactory outcome.

Precept

This remained the same for the period, the twelfth consecutive year and at present there is no intention to raise this in the coming year. As grants are reduced or withdrawn, this will be highlighted later, and the costs of maintenance rise, grass and hedge cutting etc. the councillors feel it essential it remain constant to enable the services provided in the village continue at their present level.

Highways

On a positive note, following the 'walkabout' with Tony Hunter speed roundels in the carriageway appeared at each end of the village together with horse rider warning signs and gully's were cleaned although some remain an issue. The road conditions in Hinxworth continue to be an issue. Regular reports to Highways of potholes and overgrown hedges are apparently prioritised and fail to be addressed satisfactorily. We will continue to harass Highways and their contractor Ringway about faults in the road network. A walking tour of the village will again be extended to Tony and others this year.

Allotments

The allotments appear to be growing in popularity again with apparent requests coming in for plots. I'd like to thank both Jan Woodward the previous chairperson and now, Hilary Perricone for their continued work in making the allotments a going concern and village asset. There are currently seven vacant plots available I believe out of twenty.

War Memorial

The War memorial now, I think I can speak for everyone, looks amazing and will continue to be the focal point of the village. I personally have seen many visitors stop and admire it. I'd like to thank Eric Sore and Geoff Burrows for their participation in the renovation of the memorial. Following an inspection of the building it was discovered that the overhanging trees to the rear of the memorial had adversely affected the condition of the stone surface, seating and paintwork. The relevant authority was sought for restoration work from NHDC and a local contractor carried out the work. Funding was sought from many sources but the majority was approved by the Parish council from local funds. I'd like to thank the Village Hall Committee, the Clutterbuck Trust and Tony Hunter for their contributions. The work was finished in time for the Remembrance Sunday Service. The felling of the trees behind the memorial was dealt with as a separate issue and after consultation with David Eddell it was decided that two silver birch trees closest to the wall would be removed to prevent further damage from their roots, this work was carried out by local businessman, Richard Ground, the cost again coming from community funds. The maintenance of the clock is ongoing and will be due this year. I'm sure, following the extensive and costly work the whole village and visitors will admire it for many years to come.

Community Access Defibrillator

At the request of a resident it was proposed that a Community Access Defibrillator be made available in the village for emergency use. Original discussions looked at fundraising for this expensive equipment but following a successful bid for funds The British Heart Foundation supplied not only the machine, but also the cabinet and training equipment to teach local residents operational techniques. Following discussions with the Three Horseshoes it was decided to place the equipment on an external wall with 24-hour public Access. I'd like to thank Gerry Methven and Hawthorne Leisure for their

support in this venture. Training sessions by a qualified tutor are being arranged and will be available soon to be held in the village hall and will be advertised locally.

Dog Fouling

This has caused anguish for several residents both with dog owners not scooping or when they have depositing the bags in resident's household bins. Whilst the culprits are unidentified and hopefully they are not locals this will remain an issue. To encourage clearing up the mess the Parish Council have purchased signage and placed them strategically around the village. This will continue to be monitored and further signs placed if necessary.

Village Hall

We salute the VHMC for their continued success in fundraising and organisation of village events. Hinxfest particularly stands out so thanks go to the committee for their enthusiasm. The village hall is an asset to everyone and is used well, by the W.I, the youth club and many others all of which takes hard work and organisation, so thanks again to all concerned.

Recreation Ground

This is maintained at village expense and it is well used by both local clubs and The Archers. Maintenance costs are increasing with funding from elsewhere being reduced so this will have to be reviewed in the coming year. The annual inspection of the play area covered some minor recommendations so the Parish Council have organised a working party on the 20th April to rectify some of these. It was published last year that the practice of a village bonfire area was ceasing because of health and safety issues, until recently this has worked but rubbish is again appearing. The Caravan Club have again booked for a weekend in 2017 following their successful gathering in September. Although they are self contained they bring much needed revenue. The continued use by Hinxworth Archers of the recreation ground was agreed early in the year after prolonged negotiations, following the signing of a new, comprehensive agreement and safety inspection by Archery GB. We are pleased that HAC decided to remain at the venue and will hopefully do so for many years to come. Their continued success at local level and nationally is an asset to the village and will hopefully encourage more local residents to take up the sport.

Planning

Whilst there are no new planning issues within the village the ongoing concern from residents regarding the development of the land adjacent to Cantebury remains. This is being closely monitored by North Herts and it strengthens concerns if individual residents register their worries directly also. The Parish Council will continue to work with NHDC to monitor the situation.

Lastly I/we would like to thank all those unpaid volunteers in the village who go out of their way to make this a thriving community, Jayne Whitfield for her work and commitment to the youngsters of the village, Janet Fair for her charity work through the Christmas card scheme, Gordon Hayden for maintaining the clock, the Village Hall Committee, the WI for giving us men one quiet Thursday night a month. I'm sure there are many others I've missed, but thank you.

Russell Lewis