

**PADBURY PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2016
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Introduction

The aim of this report (and indeed this meeting) is to update the residents of Padbury on developments within the community, and in particular to provide an account of the activities of their Parish Council, over the past year. I will also use this opportunity to signpost possible activities in the coming year.

The report covers the whole year, although I have only been Chairman since October 2015, following the resignation of David McGahey when he moved to Devon. I'd like to express my gratitude to him in leaving the Parish Council in such good order when I was elected to office. As I will explain, the workload of the Parish Council continues to be heavy, and is highly likely to increase in the short to mid-term.

Planning

We have been actively involved in the consultation process towards the Vale of Aylesbury Plan, which is now due to be made next year. This process has involved attendance at many meetings at various levels, and scrutinising and commenting on the Plan and its supporting evidence as it has developed. This is important, as it will govern the shape of the Vale for many years to come. The consultation process continues this summer, and you can be assured that the Parish Council will continue to be engaged, and I would encourage residents of Padbury to do the same, especially as it is likely that we can expect to see numbers and locations of housing uplift allocated under the Plan to be released.

Whilst we have designated Padbury as a 'Neighbourhood Area', we have made no realistic progress in making a Neighbourhood Plan, which is likely to put us at a disadvantage when defending the village against inappropriate development in the future. The Parish Council cannot do this on our own, and I'd urge residents to become engaged with this process.

We have, of course, had the usual large numbers of planning applications within the village, ranging from relatively simple alterations to existing houses to (for a village of this size) significant developments. Many residents have been active in raising objections to many of these, and their engagement has been very reassuring.

Devolution

Over recent months we have been engaged with Buckinghamshire County Council in negotiating our involvement in devolved grass and hedge cutting services. This has taken a lot of effort to achieve, but we now have a contract with Lynch Garden Services to provide these activities on our behalf, and the standard achieved so far has been impressive. Financial support from BCC to cover these services will decrease year on year, and we have made provision for this in our budget.

It is likely that further services may be considered appropriate for devolution in the future.

Speed Monitoring

Speeding through the village continues to be a problem. The speed detection device owned by the Parish Council has been used at a number of locations on rotation. The most significant village initiative to try to reduce this problem is the Speedwatch programme. This is carried out by a number of volunteers, who were (until very recently) led by Debbie Gibbs who started this initiative when she was a Parish Councillor, and we are very grateful for their efforts. She has had to give this up given a perceived conflict with her role as a Magistrate. As a result, Padbury Speedwatch is currently suspended. We are always looking for Speedwatch volunteers and would now urge someone to put themselves forward to head up this important function. It would be a great pity (especially given the ongoing concerns with regards to the obvious hazards posed by speeding) if this effort is unable to continue.

Playing Fields and Play Area

The playing fields and pavilion continue to be regularly used by a number of village related sports clubs, and also to host a range of social and other events such as Play around the Parishes. Henry Paxton's efforts as groundsman are considerable and effective, for which many thanks. Regrettably, there have been a number of occurrences of vandalism on site in recent months resulting in costly damage, and a number of measures have been put in place to attempt to prevent recurrences. This includes the installation of CCTV. The Parish Council will press the Police to prosecute those who can be proven to be involved with this unacceptable anti-social behaviour.

The Play Area on Main Street is well-used, and the Parish Council puts a lot of effort in to ensuring that it is a safe and attractive environment.

Millennium Wood

The Parish Council remains responsible for the maintenance and management of this village asset. A very successful work party took place in November to coppice part of the wood, and we are very grateful for all those who gave up their time to assist. Further sessions are likely later this year.

Highways Issues

Residents will be aware of the considerable amount of repairs and improvements to the roads (particularly along the A413 and around Springfields) last autumn. However, a number of the smaller roads still have many potholes. Unfortunately, funding for all non-statutory work by BCC has been suspended, and this has impacted greatly on this type of repair. Nevertheless, we continue to press for our 'share' of repairs at every opportunity.

A cycleway is to be built connecting Buckingham to Winslow and will pass through the top of the village along the A413. Residents can expect disruption during its construction over the next few months.

We continue to expend much effort in repairing and replacing street lights throughout the village.

War Memorial

As a result of the research carried out by members of the Padbury Sick Benefit Society into the Padbury men who were involved in the First World War, it was discovered that a name was missing from the village war memorial. The name of 123710 Private William Thomas Grimsley Royal Army Medical Corps was therefore added to the memorial in time for Remembrance Sunday 2015.

Crime and Anti-social Behaviour

There have been a number of spates of break-ins and burglaries (especially related to cars and outbuildings) over the past year. The Police are aware, but we would urge continuing vigilance and the taking of appropriate precautions.

I have already mentioned vandalism in the village, but the age-old problem of dog fouling continues. This is really inexcusable given the provision of disposal bins (the emptying of which has to be paid for) and as a basic requirement of dog care. It is at best disrespectful of fellow villagers and at worst a hazard to health especially for children. It has already proved to be a problem for our grass-cutting contractor. Those continuing to act in this way need to be reminded that dog fouling attracts a fine of up to £1 000.

Finances

A full report from our Treasurer follows, and I would not dream of stealing her thunder on this. However, the headlines are that the Parish Council financial position remains healthy. It will be noted that we have had to raise the precept as a prudent measure to ensure that we will be able to support those services that have been (and those that might be) devolved to the Parish Council.

Conclusion

It has been another busy year for the Parish Council, and I am extremely grateful for all that my fellow Councillors have done (including those who have stood-down over recent months) to help make Padbury such an attractive and pleasant place to live in. They do so in many different ways, and their efforts are often overlooked, but not by me.

I am also very grateful to our Parish Clerk, who not only acts as our Treasurer but who also has the unenviable task of keeping us as a Council on the straight and narrow as our 'Proper Officer' and therefore keeping us out of trouble. Additionally this year, she has set up a Parish Council website and pursued a number of other initiatives to ensure our activities are afforded the necessary transparency.

On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to record my thanks to all those residents who have attended Parish Council meetings over the past year, and for all those who give up their time and talents over the whole range of village activities. We will hear about some of those a little later.

