

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE YEAR ENDED
TUESDAY 9th MAY 2017
MEMBERS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL
2016/2017

Councillors

Malcolm Harwood - Chairman

Christine Anne Egerton – Vice- Chairman

Michael Roy Cecil Pallott

Joanne Williams

Oliver Jones

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Foreword

This is my first Annual Report as Chairman and member of the parish council.

The Year's Work

Town or Village Green

The two Greens and the majority of grass verges in the centre of the village are designated as Town or Village Green, a form of common land. The parish council has ownership of this land and has a legal duty to protect it for the benefit of all parishioners. Prior to the new council coming into being, attention was drawn to damage being caused to the designated land as a result of unlawful works and the long term parking of motor vehicles. Four locations were identified and the co-operation of the parties concerned was sought in resolving the problem. In addition, a policy of 'no parking' on the Greens and verges was adopted, reinforced by the erection of appropriate signage. Three of the parties complied with the request; two by refraining from parking on the land and the other by reinstating an area of turf previously removed. Unfortunately, the co-operation of the fourth party was not forthcoming, resulting in the parish council having to take legal action. The matter was partially resolved in September 2016, without attending court, and the eventual payment at the beginning of 2017 of a sum that covered the legal costs of the Parish Council. Payment

to cover the cost for reinstating the turf damaged by the wilful continuation of parking on newly laid turf, paid for by the Parish Council, is still being sought. This task made more difficult by the offending party having now moved out of the village.

Waste water disposal in Carr Close

For some years heavy rainstorms have resulted in the discharge of waste water (effluent) in Carr Close and other areas of the village. A particularly heavy storm in July 2016 caused the Parish Council to write to the Chief Executive of Yorkshire Water demanding that this long standing problem be resolved. A regular programme of flushing the waste water pipes at the Corner of Church Lane and Sleights Lane and the promise to reline a section of pipeline running across the road between the village green and village hall has been given. There remains the problem with Sunny Bank semi-detached houses where they were built with a combined waste and surface water system which eventually flows along the back of Carr Close bungalows. The pinch points mentioned above create a backing up of water whenever there is an exceptional rainstorm. The Parish Council will continue to press for the Sunny Bank combined system to be upgraded.

Removal of Electricity Power supply pole and support.

Plans were submitted by Northern Powergrid to move the power supply pole and strut from outside Aspley House and replace it with an underground line running under the road as well as renewing service connections to several dwellings. After along delay they have declined to continue for fear of action if they damage the village green despite written assurances from the Parish Council that all we require is for them to return it the condition they found it in. This is Council's normal request to all utilities that require to disturb the village greens/verges. The Parish Council has written a formal letter of complaint to Northern Powergrid and await a response.

Finance

It is a legal requirement of the parish council to determine the local precept – the money required to meet parish expenditure and maintain a reserve. This levy is included in the annual council tax bill. It has not been possible to maintain the current precept level and it will be increased to £6000 for 2017/2018. We will not receive the grant of £296 from the District Council of a Council Tax Support Grant.

The major items of expenditure continue to be the cost of grass cutting and the Clerk's salary.

The Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer is a part-time paid employee of the Council, working 20 hours per month, and is subject to a legal contract and national pay and conditions.

A copy of the accounts for the year 2016/2017 (un-audited) is attached.

Harrogate District Local Plan. Future development sites

For a number of years, Harrogate Borough Council has been working on producing its Local Development Plan. The first attempt was withdrawn in 2014 following criticisms of it by the Planning Inspectorate who identified a lack of sufficient housing provision.

In the autumn of that year, the District Council called upon landowners and developers to put forward sites for consideration of being ear-marked for future development and inclusion in its revised plan.

The parish council made a Freedom of Information Act request to establish whether any sites had been submitted in respect of Rainton. This revealed that four sites have been put forward; two at Brakehill Farm; one at Grange Farm and another on former Village Farm land. Whilst the District Council had yet to decide if any of them would be included in the plan, Grange Farm site had already received planning approval for the construction of a total of nine dwellings. The outcome were to be determined later in 2016.

The District Council published a consultative plan document in the October 2016 with a 12 week window in which to comment upon the proposals. Rainton Parish Council submitted a 10 point letter plus a copy of the Rainton Parish plan as evidence to support our comments.

The results of this consultative process have now been published. Grange Farm development, with planning approval already in place for 9 houses, Brakehill Farm with potential for up to 25 houses and Village Farm with potential for up to 25 houses have all been "earmarked" for development.

A total of 59 houses, plus other development already in the pipeline.

As can be seen below this does not accord with the wishes of the majority of parishioners.

Rainton Parish Pain.

The original 2003-2013 plan period having passed, it was considered to be necessary to look again towards formulating a new plan. A Working Group was formed and its members Sally and Nathan Schofield; Kim Pallott; Oliver Jones; Chris Andrews; Mike Pallott; David Cornmell and Malcolm Harwood.

A questionnaire survey was carried out during the first two weeks of March 2016. 160 questionnaires were delivered (one per household) and 126 were returned completed. A response rate of 78.8%. The findings of the survey were published in the newsletter and the report published to coincide with the launch of the Harrogate District Council consultative Local Plan.

Three major areas were highlighted:

1. A redrawn building development line taking into account the wishes of 49% and 45% of parishioners (94% in total) that development should only be "small" (1-3 houses) or "medium" (3-15 houses) respectively.
2. Immediate action by Yorkshire Water to solve the problem of foul water discharge in Carr Close.
3. Investigation of alternatives to ease on-street parking.

Progress on these topics has been slow, despite monthly reminders to the relevant bodies.

Housing Development and Planning

As can be deduced from the above paragraphs housing planning is the single most important issue facing the Parish Council.

The Parish Council have informed Harrogate Borough Council that until the three key points in the Rainton Parish Plan 2016 are resolved we will not agree to future housing development in the village.

However even with the weight of the views of the majority of parishioners it remains to be seen whether the Rainton Parish Plan is taken into account or ignored.

There has already been an approach made (April 2017) by a planning organisation for a proposed development of up to 20 houses on the land at Village Farm that falls outside of the building development line proposed in the Rainton Parish Plan.

Of concern in the 2016 Chairman's report was the planning application for the change of use of Rainton Quarry into a clay pigeon shooting site. This was vigorously fought with 39 local inhabitants objecting in writing to Harrogate Council. Even after pressure to put the application to a full planning committee meeting in Harrogate and the Chairman of Rainton Parish Council attending and speaking on behalf of the village the application was allowed to proceed after a close vote of 7 votes against to eight votes for. The operation and future use of this site are under constant review by the Parish Council who have already clarified with the planning authority that the present owners would not be allowed to effectively "sublet" the planning consent to third parties.

Grass Cutting

A major cost that falls on the Parish Council is that of Grass cutting in the village including the Sports and Recreation field.

As was reported last year a large proportion of the County Council amenity grant was withdrawn last year

A three year contract however was awarded in 2014 to C.E. & C.M. Walker. It was been possible to maintain the existing regime of 15 cuts per year

Conclusion

All in all, another busy year for the parish council in dealing with on-going issues affecting Rainton and its parishioners.

I would also like to express my personal thanks for the support given by my fellow councillors and Clerk to the Council.

Malcolm Harwood
Chairman
May 2017