

KIRK HAMMERTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 16 May 2016

CHAIR'S REPORT

As usual, I would like to highlight the main developments that have occurred in the village over the past 12 months. In previous years the main issue occupying our attention has been the plans to build a new waste plant at Allerton, but despite the opposition of many Parish Councils in the area the project has been cleared to proceed. There is now a period of construction and it will be some time before we actually see the plant in operation. The outcome was a disappointment but it remains to be seen what the effect on the village will be.

In recent months our focus has turned to planning and the long term development status of the village. Harrogate BC has published its draft options for development in the area and one of the alternatives under consideration would involve a very significant housing development on green field sites in the area bordered by Kirk and Green Hammerton, Whixley and Cattal. The potential effect would be to create a small town, thereby changing the character of the local environment completely. The logic is hard to understand but seems to be linked to the fact that there are two railway stations nearby. There is a vague suggestion that transport links may be upgraded on this line, although given that much of the line is single track it is hard to see how this could happen without significant investment. The recent cancellation of the Leeds Trolleybus scheme, however, due to lack of capital does not suggest that transport investment is as high on the agenda locally as the Harrogate BC plans assume.

The Parish Council is actually quite keen to support housing development locally. We see this as a way to bring in young families who will support the village school and of delivering some affordable housing for those with connections to KH who can't afford to live here anymore owing to the high property prices. For that reason we have supported plans to develop the Agricon land close to the station and the Coidan Graphite plant, together with a smaller development at Pool Lane Classics. The effect of these developments (which, astonishingly, Harrogate Planning seem to oppose) would be to increase the number of dwellings in the village by more than 10%, which is a

significant change. It shows that our opposition to the Harrogate BC proposals is not about NIMBY-ism. We are willing to do our bit to address the housing shortages in the borough. On the other hand, we do want KH to remain a village. We are keen to establish a constructive dialogue with HBC planning if they would only engage with us and the election of a new Borough Councillor for Ribston ward, whom we welcome to our meeting tonight, will hopefully provide an opportunity to kick-start this process, ahead of the next draft of the HBC strategy document, which is due in the summer.

There has been some positive news on planning and property development. The first stage of the re-development of the Village Hall has been completed and the conditions have been met to secure funding for stage 2. It's a significant improvement to facilities in the village and we look forward to the next stage.

We have also made progress in our search for a new burial ground, which is now quite urgently needed as the churchyard is nearly full. It is too early to make any announcement. That could be several months away yet but we are much more optimistic that at this time last year that somewhere can be found within the village.

We have secured funding to purchase defibrillators at more than one site in the village. This is an important first aid assistance which does not require any special training to operate and can therefore be used by any village members in the event of an emergency, without having to wait for an ambulance to arrive. The first cabinet is already in position at the village hall and a generous donation of some further equipment by a village resident means that we hope to be able to install further machines at other sites, possibly the Co-Op on the main road and the railway station. Cllr Chris Eaton has taken the initiative on this and we are very grateful for his efforts.

Maintaining the safety theme, thanks to some of my colleagues on the Parish Council we have also taken steps to put in place a Community Resilience Scheme. This will mean we are much better prepared for emergencies.

Our finances continue to be sound, although there have been some additional expenses this year, such as support for the Allerton Waste campaign, which have prompted us to raise the Parish Precept significantly for the first time in a

decade. We intend this to be a one-off occurrence, even though it represents a tiny fraction of the overall Council Tax bill and we are still well below the level of many other parishes.

I would like to conclude my report by thanking Les and Janice Hornby, for their continuing efforts in producing the Village Newsletter and acting as the unofficial parish newsagents and Bernard Gascoyne for his continuing support of the parish website. Last but not least, our clerk Amanda, without whose invaluable support we would struggle to function.

There is a new Parish Council taking office immediately after this meeting and this is an opportunity to say thank you and farewell to two of our councillors who are standing down. David Whittaker has added some wise and thoughtful input to our last 4 years and it will be strange to have a Parish Council without Paul Spurgeon's involvement. He was my predecessor as Chair and has been a member of the Parish Council for (I believe) approaching two decades. They will be missed and we thank them for their support.

That concludes my report.

Paul Townsend

16 May 2016