

## Annual Report 2015-16

This council year has been one of development of our staff, maintaining services and working steadily towards long term goals.

We have a full complement of Parish Councillors and once again I would like to put on record my thanks to all Members who give so much of their time unpaid to undertake their duties. We are fortunate to have a strong team with a breadth of skills and experience.

Once again we complete the year in a good financial position. With careful management we have completed the year with a surplus of £8756 which will be moved into reserves, following the transfer of £30,000 into the Fixed Deposit account (development of the community leisure facilities) and £5,500 into earmarked reserves (rolling play equipment programme). One of the headwinds we have had to deal with is the reduction of the Council Tax Support Grant from Harborough District Council (HDC). In 2014-15 this grant was £15,911 and last year 2015-16 it reduced to £10,607. This year it was reduced to £0, so we have had to make savings in our investment plans to cover the shortfall. We have balanced all of this and ended up with a precept of £261,994 for 2016-17 compared to £259,772 in the previous year. Virtually a flat rate at less than 1% rise, but with significantly reduced room for manoeuvre in the coming financial year.

The auditors gave us another unqualified audit report demonstrating the strong controls which are in place and are operated effectively.

The council has been reviewed and granted Quality Status under the Local Council scheme. Once again this reflects the controls and management which has been in place for some years and is maintained.

We have embraced new technology with Parish Councillors now having the option to receive all meeting agendas, minutes and documentation electronically rather than in printed form. Members of the public can still request printed copies of any documentation. This clearly demonstrates that we are constantly looking to find ways to work more efficiently so as to control costs while maintaining services.

Despite the financial pressures we have maintained our rolling maintenance programme on the recreation ground with the replacement of one old piece of equipment with an accessible roundabout. The roundabout is specifically designed to allow wheelchairs to be used on it thus allowing those less mobile to enjoy the facilities under suitable supervision and support.

In the battle against dog fouling we issued 110,000 bags last year to residents and have increased this to 153,000 for the year ahead. Despite that and the provision of over 40 dog bins in the village, we still have occasions where dog fouling is an issue. We can only hope that the very few dog owners who don't take their responsibilities

seriously do so for everyone's benefit. We provide the means but owners need to play their part.

Considering developments in the village, the two main housing developments have started with the Jelson's site on Broughton Way being the most obvious. The original supermarket contender, Morrison's, withdrew due to wider business problems and has been replaced by Aldi. This changed the site mix as Morrison's would have had a petrol station. This gap has been taken up by a separate application for a car show room with six service bays.

The names of the new roads on the Jelson's estate were selected to remember and honour those who fell in the Great War.

We are actively working with Jelson's as it is their land which will be used for the new community facility and provide space for a new medical centre in due course. In order to progress the plan we are in the process of recruiting a company to project manage the next phase to take us to the point of putting out a tender request for bid for potential operators to respond to. We are working closely with HDC, Thomas Estley Community College (TECC) and other stakeholders to ensure best practice is followed and all parties are involved and informed as required. The development of the community facility will use S106 monies derived from current and previous developments and we are working with HDC to ensure all funds due to the Parish are made available for what will be the most significant developments in our village for many years.

We have continued to improve facilities on the allotments site with the installation of new, lighter gates and the replacement of an overhead barrier to deter large vehicles and unwanted visitors from entering the car park. Having expanded the allotments in the past few years we currently have a small waiting list of 4 people which is a healthy sign that people value these allotments.

With regards to Parish staff it has been a year of development. Our administration assistant, Nicola Elson, passed her Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA), which is the qualification required for a Parish Clerk whilst our deputy clerk, Alison Wood, is on course to do the same in this Council year. As a result, we have one of the best qualified Parish teams in the area.

We experienced little staff turnover over the year; however, one premises officer left to concentrate on his own business which we wish him well with. We have been fortunate to find a good replacement in Colin Noyce. In the intervening period our other premises officer, Neil Malin, worked extended hours to ensure we maintained the quality of service village hall users have come to expect. Our thanks are placed on record for his efforts. This typifies the team work and service ethic of the Parish staff we are fortunate to have working for Broughton Astley Parish Council.

The Parish Council has supported community events in the village including the summer carnival and the increasingly popular Christmas Fayre, where it is the principle sponsor. In March the office staff held the second slipper exchange for elderly residents in the village. Ill-fitting slippers are one of the main causes of trips and falls resulting in hospitalisation and worse. This simple scheme provides pensioners with correctly fitting slippers to reduce the risk.

Other grants included £250 to BestLife, a volunteer group who provide alternative therapies to the long term ill. Naturespot was also provided with a grant of £350 for the installation of new gates at the Broughton Astley Brick Quarry.

We still support the annual Carol Concert in the Village Hall, which this year again welcomed the South Leicestershire Salvation Army band.

In closing this report I will say that we face challenges ahead in keeping on track to deliver what was laid out in the Neighbourhood Plan; however, we are committed to do this and will update the public as we move forwards.

Clive Grafton-Reed

Chairman – Broughton Astley Parish Council.