

Henley Parish Council

Chairman's Report May 17

May I thank the current councillors for their support during these past 12 months, it is always difficult to volunteer your own time especially when all of us sit on other committees within the village and also our ever-increasing work demands. My I also thank Councillor Keith Lawrence for his support and efforts over the past year. Keith has now resigned from his position.

May I also personally thank our parish clerk Rod Caird who once again has maintained the Parish administration to his normal very high standard throughout the past 12 months. Rod has given the village good clear communication through our email system, web-site and local magazine.

The Glass bottle bank is still being used regularly – this has been a real success since its installation in May 2016 – we are being emptied every 2 weeks.

The Parish Council supported the annual Christmas Fayre this year – I am pleased once again to say it was a great success.

The Broadband radio system, which is transmitted from the Community centre, now reaches as far as Crowfield as well as serving properties within the Henley Square area. We now are able to support some 50 households with broadband.

After some initial success, the school parking respect zone initiative is failing. This is mainly due to a small amount of out of catchment parents not respecting the wishes of the School & Parish council and parking within the respect zone. On a few occasions some councillors have been and observed the situation, but have been subject to verbal abuse and threatening behaviour. We have decided to remove ourselves physically until other possible options can be decided on. The increased parking at Pond End is also a concern which will need to be addressed as part of the councils overall parking plan. It must also be noted that the Parish council has spent over £5k on a public footpath into the Community centre to make it a safer environment for parents to walk from the carpark to school. This was agreed from our initial feedback from parents when the respect zone was introduced. Clearly, it's very frustrating when sometimes you observe only 4-5 parents' cars parked. Once again, a massive thankyou to Councillor Redbond who has taken on this project with broad shoulders!

The portable speed detection sign has given us some good information regarding average speeds at certain times of the day. We have published some facts during the year and hopefully making drivers aware of their speeds. We will continue to move the sign around the village to assess where the hot spots are. Thank you to Councillors' Marks & Brock who are managing this project.

The PC has also supported the planning objection to change the local public house into a residential house. This has taken a lot effort in terms of meetings and attending planning committee dates at MSDC. It has been noted that the owner has rejected an offer for the advertised valuation as a going concern but is now currently not marketing the property. We have written to the owner asking what his intentions are but nothing has been received.

We have replaced the parish notice board at the Fiveways bus stop. A decision will be made soon on the graffiti in the bus shelter – we had mixed responses when we asked the village for their views.

We have completed 2 litter picks during the year – thankyou to the small number of volunteers that turn up to try and keep the village litter free admittedly for a short amount of time. Sadly, we may have to abandon this project if we don't get increased volunteer support – 4 hours over a year is all we are asking?

The parish council has also replaced a number of upright supports and fencing at the Community playground to a cost of around £4k during the year – this is part of our required playground safely assessment.

Thank

you to our County Councillor, John Field, who has supported us with these repairs.

As I stated last year the village is suffering from being an 'aging' community which is common in many towns & villages around the country. The village will clearly need an injection of energy in the future as it has enjoyed over the past 80 years. New housing will certainly help, and the council has agreed in principle to create a development plan that we serve the needs of the village for years to come. However, we need to identify suitable locations and what sort of housing is possibility required. A survey has now been delivered to the entire village to understand what the residents think we need for the future. This would give us some control with any form of new development within our boundaries. This injection would clearly benefit the community in many ways, but we also need to be mindful of the effect it could have on transport & services.

On behalf of the Parish council, I would like to publicly say a massive well done to Henley Athletic Football club, who are the first club in the SIL history to win the senior league after being promoted the previous season. A truly remarkable achievement from a small but well supported club.

I was driving into the village a few weeks ago and I looked at the village sign. My thoughts went back to when it was unveiled and some of the reasons behind the design. The sign depicts the strength & spirit, alongside the bringing together of the village as one community. I am really challenging myself on whether the village 'community spirit' is still as strong as it was some years ago. As a parish Council, I think we need to look at our values we have within the village, to understand why we currently have some disconnects, and to see how we can possibility link us all back together.

May I thank in advance the parish council for their future commitment – We will try and continue to listen and deliver clear communication to the community – but we really do need more support onto the council. We are two councillors short. It would be great to have two volunteers come forward onto the Council – many hands make light work!

Kevin Griggs

Chairman Henley Parish Council