

13 May 20

HAXEY PARISH COUNCIL – CHAIRMAN’S ANNUAL REPORT AND FUTURE PLANS – 2019/20

The aim of this report is to provide a summary of the work carried out by Haxey Parish Council over the past financial year and highlight any plans for the coming year.

The current National emergency has to be acknowledged and its effect on the Community and on the work and operation of the Parish Council, particularly from March this year. First, 2019 was an election year and resulted in the appointment of 5 new Councillors: Councillors Mark Bond, Alan Holgate, Chris Layton, Mark Parkin and Ian Thorpe and the retirement of Councillors Ron Allcock, Paul Cooke, Jerry Henwood, Alison Hunt–Siwy, and Nev Whitehead. Of particular note, Councillor Whitehead served for 40 years with 10 years as Chairman and Councillor Allcock, who served for 17 years as a Parish Councillor, would remain as a Ward Councillor for the South Axholme Ward.

Moving on to Council business. Following the reduction in the annual precept for 2019/20, the Parish Council Finance Committee considered known and forecast Council commitments and current reserve funds and recommended that the precept for 2020/21 should remain at £40,000. The Committee further recommended that as the Parish Council continues to fulfil the conditions set by North Lincolnshire Council (NLC) with regard to the acceptance of their Council Tax Grant, that the Grant is accepted for 2020/21. The Full Parish Council adopted the Finance Committee’s recommendations. Also, this year, pre the COVID-19 emergency, the Principal Authority increased the Community Charge by 3.9%, with 2% of the increase going to Adult Social Care.

The Parish Council’s workload has continued to increase over the past year. Planning matters, including enforcement reporting, Parish Land Management, general Parish maintenance management and issues raised by Parishioners continue to be dealt with on a day to day basis by the Parish Council Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and the various Committees and Working Groups set up by the Council, which are described on the Parish Council website. Moreover, there continues to be significant Councillor representation at local and County organisations such as the Local Police Forums, Haxey Combined Charities and Endowed School Estates, the Governing bodies of local Primary Schools and village amenities, the East Riding and Northern Lincolnshire Local Councils Association (ERNLLCA), Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, the North East Bassetlaw Community Liaison Group, CPRE and in the governance as Sole Trustee of Westwoodside Playing Fields Association (WPFA).

Day to day communication with all elements of North Lincolnshire Council (NLC) has been maintained and in some areas increased, resulting in the

continued improvement in relationships between NLC and the Parish and the reaction time to emerging issues. Major consultations/attendances have included commenting on local area environmental and mineral plans and projects; various National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Surveys; local Drainage Board activity in the area; Rationalising the Main River Network by the Environment Agency (EA); River Idle maintenance update; various Humber and Wolds Rural Association (HWRA) issues; the Owston Ferry Lancaster Project (including a donation) and the consultation on and input to the latest NLC Local Plan, aimed at setting the building activity in the Parish for the next 15 years. The Council has continued its involvement in potential Hydro Carbon activity in the Parish with a standing agenda item to ensure we are kept up to date on events. Local “fracking activity” in the Misson area has now ceased, mainly due to changes to Government Policy; however, Cllr Fiddler continues to represent the Council on its’ Community Liaison Group and the standing agenda item has been removed for the time being.

Despite some staff changes at NLC, the Parish Council has maintained its’ good working relationship with Planning Members and Officers and there has been some reduction in the “troublesome” list of planning issues discussed at monthly meetings; however, problems still remain, in particular with Willow Fields and Graizelound Field Rd public open space areas and trees adjoining the housing estate. This year, we have seen another slight increase in planning applications. During 2019/20 (May to April), the Parish Council considered a total of 72 Planning Applications of which 45 were passed with or without comment and the Parish Council objected to 27. The Principal Authority agreed with the Parish Council’s objection on 11 applications, agreed with the Parish Council’s “no objection” on 32 applications, overruled the Parish Council’s objection in 7 cases and overruled the Parish Council’s “no objection” in 5 cases. By 30 April 2020, 17 applications had yet to be decided. Last year, 7 applications went to appeal, resulting in 6 being dismissed and 1 being allowed. Of particular note this year, the Planning Appeal to re-develop the Duke William Public House site into housing was dismissed. In 2017, the Parish Council, concerned over the potential viability of local Public Houses, registered the Duke William, the Kings Arms and the Carpenters Arms as Assets of Community Value (ACV) with NLC. The Principal Authority supported this action which provides a “time out” of up to 6 months of any potential sale for the local community to make a bid to retain a pub. The Management of the Duke William objected to the registration, NLC dismissed the objection and the issue was referred to appeal at a General Regulatory Tribunal hearing scheduled to be held in July 2019. The Parish Council established an ACV Group which met regularly with NLC and local Resident Representatives to ensure the Tribunal information requirements were provided to meet their timeline; however in early July last year, just before the hearing, the Tribunal was “vacated” and the appeal withdrawn following formal consultations with NLC, the Parish Council and the owner of the Duke William. The settlement confirmed that the ACV remained in place for the Public House, the conservatory attached to the property and a section of the Car Park. The remainder of the site had the ACV status removed.

Another notable event this year has seen the “gifting” to the Parish Council by NLC of the “Parish Field” located between the Villages of Westwoodside and Haxey and overlooking St Nicholas Church. Following legal transfer action, the Parish Council has arranged for the clearing of the land, the selection of a Tenant and the return of the field to agricultural use. The Parish Council has expressed its gratitude on behalf of the Community to the Principal Authority for the gift of the field which, following the recent work, has improved the overall view of the land between the 2 Villages.

We have continued the practice of dedicating a period before each monthly Parish Council Meeting for the public to raise matters with the Council. Subjects this last year have included individual Planning Applications and traffic and parking issues in the Parish. Changes to the Rules for Public Participation and the ACV process have also been raised. Parishioners are encouraged to continue to use these opportunities to express their views to the Council.

The Foreman Carter Centre and Parish Council Headquarters continues to function satisfactorily as a sports and cultural facility. Following on from last year, the outside lights at the Centre are in the process of conversion to LED and the upgrade to the current surveillance system is underway. A defibrillator has also now been installed on the front of the Centre. The Parish Council again wishes to thank Richard Carter, his Management Committee and the Parish Council Clerk for their continued hard work and stewardship of the Westwoodside Playing Fields Association on their behalf as Sole Trustees.

The Council continues its involvement with the Principal Authority and the Community to improve traffic and parking problems in the Parish and this year has seen the establishment of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for the Newbigg area in Westwoodside; moreover, a TRO has also been developed for High St Haxey and is currently in the process of being introduced. The alterations will include no parking areas and limited time parking bays on High St plus the provision of a bus shelter in front of the Coop Store. The new Parish signs have been fitted; however, we have one in Westwoodside and one in Low Burnham that have already been damaged by commercial vehicles and will need to be replaced/repared in due course.

NLC has carried out a consultation on the service provided by Haxey Library and following the recruitment of local volunteers and their subsequent training, the Library has been run by the volunteers for several months under professional NLC supervision and up to March, the service was progressing well; however, due to the emergency the Library is currently closed, but is expected to re-open after the lock-down is lifted.

Westwoodside Pond has experienced various problems during the last year. Last summer, the water suffered lack of oxygen and the subsequent loss of

many of the fish in the pond. Aerators have now been fitted and are available for use as temperatures rise. Then, in mid-Winter, the pond overflowed following heavy rain and the blockage of the pond overflow drain. Working with NLC and Severn Trent Water Board, the problem and solution have been identified and the replacement of the drain is in the NLC works programme. The Parish Council is also aware of the possible requirement to dredge the pond and is in the process of identifying Contractors who could carry out the work. Other locations in the Parish also suffered flooding events following heavy rain, including repeated floods in “the Birches” area of Westwoodside from adjacent land. NLC provided sandbags, assistance and information on the riparian owners of the adjacent land and the situation was eventually stabilized by one of the land owners. Low Burnham, also experienced flooding problems and was also assisted by NLC. NLC Engineers are currently carrying out surveys into several drainage and flooding issues in the Parish with a view to making sure that drains and ditches remain clear and functioning. The Parish Council has contributed to the refurbishment of the Public Toilets and their surroundings in Haxey and again has provided more dog bins following requests from Residents and has also organised a “Dog Fouling” poster competition with local Schools. The “Jubilee Garden” in Haxey has also been refurbished. Through the Principal Authority, Haxey High and Low St have been resurfaced and plans are in the programme for the resurfacing of the Nooking and the repair of Greenhill. Following the grant of National funds to NLC, the A161 is also planned to be resurfaced from Low Burnham to the Haxey Gate level Crossing. Finally, the Parish Council has successfully arranged to take over the BT Telephone kiosk in Low St Haxey and a plan for refurbishment will be underway in the near future.

Liaison with the Haxey Parish Allotment Association has continued over the last year and once again Cllr Rose and his Wife judged the Association’s annual “best kept plot” competitions. The Parish Council also funded remedial tree work at the site. In the St Nicholas Closed Churchyard, following the periodic tree survey, remedial work on the trees has been successfully carried out. The report of the periodic survey of the Closed Churchyard memorials is awaited and remedial Health and Safety work will then be carried out by the Contractor in the coming months. Negotiations continue with the Parochial Church Council on the potential provision of extra burial plots following the removal of the Scout Hut from the Open Churchyard. The Parish Council has agreed to fund the movement of the fence in the Churchyard, has arranged for a replacement road sign indicating the location of the Church Car Park and has also provided traffic cones for use on High St by the Church to prevent traffic congestion at busy times. The Parish Cemetery on Church Lane has continued to be maintained and new gates have now been fitted. The commissioning of the cemetery and raising of the necessary administrative paperwork will be completed as and when required and the Parish Council will probably review the project during the coming year. Unfortunately, the Parish beacon was lit illegally on “Brexit Day”; luckily there was no damage caused and security measures are being taken to stop any reoccurrence. To date the culprits have yet to be identified. The Annual Armistice Remembrance

Parades took place as normal in November 2019 and once again there was an excellent local turn-out. Last year, the Parish Council established a Military Memorial Working Group, which has been tasked with researching any World War 2 air crashes in Haxey Parish. During the war there was considerable air activity in our area, principally from Sandtoft and other local airfields. The Working Group has identified 2 major incidents which took place at the end of the war involving 3 Halifax Bombers, which were on training and practice bombing missions resulting in the loss of 21 British and international airmen. Up until the beginning of March, the Council had identified the circumstances of the crashes, their locations in the Parish and all the crew members involved. Meetings have also taken place with North Lindsey College, who have volunteered to design and fabricate a memorial to the airmen; however, work on the project is currently suspended due to the lock-down. The ultimate aim, which has yet to be approved by the Parish Council, is to erect a memorial to the airmen, which could be located in Haxey's Pinfold opposite the War Memorial at Burrell's Corner.

The Parish Council has continued to be actively involved in the nationally supported Isle of Axholme, Hatfield Chase Project, which aims to preserve the local heritage and natural assets of our area. We currently have several local schemes in the Project which is now nationally funded. We continue to make progress on the publication of the Parish Archive and last year, elements of the archive were displayed at a Haxey Heritage Society open event. The refurbishment of Haxey Pinfold, funded through the Isle of Axholme Project has been completed. The Parish Council has now turned its attention to refurbishment of the Cross of Piety and the installation of electricity and the repair of Greenhill. The Council has had meetings with the local We Live Here Haxey(WLHH) Group with the aim of restoring the Haxey Meres and Townsman organisation, which has been in an uncertain state for several years. The aim was for the Group to appoint a Townsman and allocate Haxey Meres in April, but the pandemic has intervened and the process has been put on hold until 2021. The Parish Paths Working Group under the Chairmanship of Cllr Smedley and supported by the Clerk to the Council continued the successful management of its' fourth season's Paths and Bridleways maintenance and the Council has recently let the contract for the coming season's grass cutting and Parish Path maintenance; moreover, the Parish Council is continuing to support the NLC pilot scheme to manage increasing elements of further grass cutting tasks in the Parish and beyond and we have again recently awarded the contract to a local firm. The Council Planting Group has continued its good work with its aim of improving the year round look of the Parish and the Parish was rewarded at last Year's CPRE Best Kept Village Competition with a win for Haxey as best large Village and Low Burnham as first in the small Village Group and best new entrant. East Lound was also Highly Commended. Delegations from all 3 winners attended the CPRE Presentation last October. The Parish Council continues to support the Best Kept Village Competition for the coming year, which is likely to prove to be problematic due to the current situation. The NLC "In Bloom" initiative continues which, last year, enabled us to maintain the planting projects

around the Parish. Unfortunately, Mr Steve Coggan has now retired from his work setting up and maintaining the Parish planting. His exceptional efforts will be sorely missed. Finally, following last year's initiative to support the Community Speed Watch Project, the Parish has, so far, failed to achieve the number of required volunteers to take part in the scheme, although efforts to recruit will continue.

On the training front, 10 Councillors attended a "Being a Good Councillor" training event last August and the Parish Council once again sent delegates to the Annual ERNLLCA Conference in November 2019. Further training events on Code of Conduct and Planning were also attended by Councillors during the last year. In addition, the Parish Council has established a Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and NLC has just designated Haxey Parish a Neighbourhood Area, which entitles the Parish to work on and put forward a future Neighbourhood Plan. As part of this activity, the Parish Council has recently submitted recommendations for consideration by the Principal Authority when finalising its Local Plan for the next 15 years. In essence, the Parish Council's recommendations highlight areas where required local house building and type should take place in the Parish and involve the establishment of car parks for the main villages and a "market place" type organisation to ease current traffic and car parking issues. The Parish Council's input to the NLC Local Plan Consultation is available on the Haxey Parish Council website.

During the last year, the Parish Council has provided financial support to the Royal British Legion, CPRE, Isle of Axholme Physically Handicapped Society, Westwoodside and Haxey Playing Fields, Haxey Tennis Club, Haxey Cricket Club, the WLHH Group for Christmas lights, the Owston Ferry Lancaster Project, South Axholme Academy Music Department, St Nicholas Church and the Over 70s Party; moreover, the Parish Council paid NLC and various local contractors for work carried out on its behalf as well as to its internal and external auditors, Insurers, SLCC and ERNLLCA. The Council once again fully supported the annual Over 70's party, which continues to be ably organised by Jennie Ekhardt, to whom the Council once again passes on their sincere thanks. Unfortunately, this year's party has had to be cancelled.

The Parish Council will carry on the work with plans in progress, particularly with the Isle of Axholme, Hatfield Chase projects, the management of the Parish Paths and Bridleways initiative and the continuing and expanding NLC pilot grass cutting project. We will continue with direct involvement with Residents and the Principal Authority on any planning applications and parking and traffic initiatives that emerge to remedy issues at several sites in the Parish. Finally, we will continue to develop our relationships with the Principal Authority on all fronts and also keep abreast of any developments in national legislation aimed at greater devolution.

Finally, as the months of March and April of the last financial year have been overtaken by the Coronavirus Pandemic situation and the subsequent national lock-down, the Parish Council has contributed to the co-ordination of the

welfare and communication elements required for the Parish with St Nicholas Church and NLC together with the provision and publication of an information sheet for Residents. Casualties of the national requirements placed on the Community by the pandemic have included the cancellation of the formal activities to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of VE Day and other local activities which were planned for the spring and summer, as the “New Normal” is being experienced by all Residents. The Parish Council has had to comply with the Government’s recent major alterations to the 1972 legislation governing Town and Parish Councils, has entered the 21st Century “virtual” world due to “Social Distancing” and is determined to continue with its’ work supporting the local Community during and beyond the emergency.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Chairman would like to acknowledge the hard work of all Parish Councillors and to thank the Vice-Chair, Councillors and the Parish Council Clerk for the first-rate support they have provided over the past year.