4 May 21

**HAXEY PARISH COUNCIL – CHAIRMAN’S ANNUAL REPORT AND FUTURE PLANS – 2020/21**

1. 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.

2. The current National pandemic emergency continues to have a profound effect on the Community and has required modifications to the operation of the Parish Council; however, following Government legislation changes, particularly from March 2020 and the authority to utilise virtual practices and software applications, the Parish Council has met and continues to meet all its business and legislative commitments on time; however, the authority to use virtual means for meetings expires on 7 May 21 and despite extensive calls for an extension, the Government has indicated that face to face meetings only are to be re-instated due to the lack of Parliamentary time.

3. Moving on to Council business. First, finances, the Parish Council Finance Committee considered known and forecast Council commitments and current reserve funds and recommended that the precept for 2021/22 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 2021/22. The Full Parish Council has adopted the Finance Committee’s recommendations. Also, this year, the Principal Authority increased the Community Charge by 5%, with 3% of the increase going to Health and Social Care.

4. Despite the national emergency, the Parish Council’s workload has been maintained with planning matters, including enforcement reporting, Parish Land Management, general Parish maintenance management and issues raised by Parishioners continuing 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 all 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 and Endowed School Estates charities, the Governing bodies of local Primary Schools and village amenities, the East Riding and Northern Lincolnshire Local Councils Association (ERNLLCA), Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Haxey Parish Community Support Group, CPRE and in the governance as Sole Trustee of Westwoodside Playing Fields Association (WPFA).

5. Day to day communication with all elements of North Lincolnshire Council has, in general, been maintained, although due to the extra welfare demands on the Principal Authority, responses have understandably slowed down. Parish consultations over the last year 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, presentations by KCOM, which is in competition to provide broadband services in North Lincolnshire and continued monitoring of activity towards the publication of the latest NLC Local Plan, aimed at setting the building activity in the Parish for the next 15 years. The standing Council agenda item on “fracking activity” in the Misson area has now ceased due to the site being put to care and maintenance, but monitoring of the overall local hydro-carbon activity remains.

6. The Parish Council has maintained its’ good working relationship with NLC Planning Members and Officers; however, the list of “troublesome” areas and enforcement action has increased and problems still remain, in particular with Willow Fields. This year, there has been another increase in planning applications in the Parish and a general overview of applications reveals that during 2020/21 (April to March), the Parish Council considered a total of 103 Planning Applications, of which 87 were passed with or without comment and the Parish Council objected to 16. The Principal Authority agreed with the Parish Council’s objection on 9 applications, agreed with the Parish Council’s “no objection” on 77 applications, overruled the Parish Council’s objection in 7 cases and overruled the Parish Council’s “no objection” in 3 cases. By 30 March 2021, 7 applications had yet to be decided by NLC and 4 applications had been sent to appeal, resulting in all being dismissed. Of note this last year, another Planning Application to re-develop the Duke William Public House site has been refused and a further application is currently pending. The Asset of Community Value (ACV) restriction remains on the Duke William, which aside from the current hospitality “lock down” has now closed for business.

7. We have continued the practice of dedicating a period before each monthly Parish Council Meeting for the public to raise matters with the Council. Take up of these opportunities in the virtual environment has been limited and this last year mainly concerned with individual proposed developments and Planning Applications. Parishioners are encouraged to continue to use these opportunities to express their views to the Council.

8. Due to the pandemic restrictions on sports activity and gatherings/meetings, the Parish Council Headquarters and the Foreman Carter (FC) Centre has remained closed for most of the last year; however, the Westwoodside Playing Fields Association(WPFA), along with other Parish Halls and sports fields have received the grants allocated to them under the Covid financial support package. The FC Centre facility has been risk assessed and fully modified to meet the Covid regulations and as the Community slowly emerges from “lock down”, the Centre and other Parish venues have started to be used for limited activities. The improvement and maintenance programme for the Centre has continued and the entrance road has been upgraded; the roof of the building and the sports container have been repaired and the building guttering has also been replaced. The security and surveillance system at the Centre has been updated and enhanced and the facilities in the Function Room have been improved. 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 WPFA on their behalf as Sole Trustees.

9. 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 installation of a bus shelter in front of the Coop and the movement of the bus stop on Haxey High St. The completion of the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for Haxey High St has been delayed due to the pandemic; however, the damaged Parish signage, reported last year, has now been replaced.

10. Haxey Library currently remains closed, but is ready to reopen when allowed; however, the mobile library has continued to provide its visiting service during the “lock down”. Although there have been some improvements, Westwoodside Pond continues to experience problems and the most recent has necessitated the Parish Council employing the services of a vermin specialist due to the increase in the rat population, primarily caused by Residents feeding the ducks. New signs discouraging the feeding and encouraging Residents to take their refuse home will be erected shortly. The work to rectify the drainage problems at the pond is currently delayed and the removal of the silt from the pond continues to be a major project for the Parish Council to take forward. NLC Engineers continue to carry 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. NLC is currently embarking on a County-wide survey into dog and refuse bins with a view to optimising and improving the system. The Haxey Telephone Box, which has been adopted by the Council, has been refurbished and Dr Dyson’s Bus Shelter site off Vinehall Rd has also been cut back and the shelter tidied up. Finally, the NLC resurfacing programme for local roads has also been delayed due to the pandemic; however, some major work on the A161 has been completed and more is planned.

11. Liaison with the Haxey Parish Allotment Association has continued over the last year and the Parish Council has arranged for the roof of the on-site container to be re-sealed. Here again social gatherings have been curtailed by the Association due to the Covid restrictions, but cultivation etc. has continued within the Covid rules. In the St Nicholas Closed Churchyard, the safety survey and memorial rectification has been delayed due to Covid regulations. In the open Churchyard and in co-operation with the Parochial Church Council, the project to remove the old scout hut and clear land to provide extra burial plots for the Community has been completed and the fence around the Church Hall car park has been replaced. The Parish Cemetery on Church Lane has continued to be maintained and the Parish Council has recently considered a request to purchase the land and return it to “garden use” following the acquisition of 7 Church Lane by a new owner. The Council has resolved not to dispose of the land at this time. A much curtailed commemoration of the VJ day anniversary took place in August 2020 involving a short but well attended, socially distanced, outdoor service, a piper and a bugler. The Annual Armistice Remembrance Parades, supported by St Nicholas Church, Military Veteran organisations and the Lions took place as normal on 8 and 11 November 2020, adhering to Covid restrictions and social distancing regulations and once again there was an excellent local turn-out. The Military Memorial Working Group has had to curtail its activities due to the pandemic and protracted closure of North Lindsey College; however, the project will be re-started as we come out of lock-down. The Parish Council has yet to approve the funding for the project, designed and fabricated by the College, to commemorate the 3 WW2 aircraft and crews, which crashed in the Parish with the loss of all on board. The Haxey Pinfold has been suggested as the potential site for the Memorial, which will require the authority of Haxey Townsmen; however, the plan to re-appoint Townsmen, the historic custodians of the Meres and Pinfold, being organised by the local We Live Here Haxey(WLHH) Group, has had to be put on hold for the time being. An associated military related event, dealt with by the Parish Council, emerged when a Resident observed that one of the names of the WW2 local “fallen” was incorrectly recorded on the War Memorial at Burrells Corner. The Resident was a distant relative of the RAF aircrew concerned, Sergeant Herbert Ogley, an Air Gunner aged 18. The story of his short life and flying service proved particularly interesting and is recorded on the Parish Council website. The War Memorial inscription has now been corrected.

12. The Parish Council has continued to be actively involved in the Isle of Axholme, Hatfield Chase Project, which aims to preserve the local heritage and natural assets of our area. The Parish Council has several local schemes in the Project, which is now nationally funded. Projects include continued work on the Parish Archive and attention is now on the refurbishment of the Cross of Piety, the installation of electricity to Greenhill and the completion of the repair to the site by NLC, which again has unfortunately been delayed. 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’ fifth season of Paths and Bridleways maintenance and the Council has recently let the contract for the coming season’s grass cutting and Parish Path maintenance. In addition, the Council has funded the placement of “rustic” benches on major arteries of the Public Rights of Way. Finally, the Parish Council continues to support the NLC pilot scheme to devolve and manage increasing elements of further grass cutting tasks in the Parish and beyond and the Council has again recently awarded this contract to a local firm. The Council Planting Group has continued its good work with the aim of improving the year-round look of the Parish. This year, the Parish achieved joint third for Haxey and Westwoodside in the CPRE Best Kept Village Competition. The Parish Council will support the CPRE competition for the coming year, which is again likely to prove to be problematic, due to the current situation. The NLC “In Bloom” initiative also continues, which has again, enabled us to maintain the planting projects around the Parish; moreover the Council is working with NLC and the Woodland Trust to plant around 1000 shrubs and trees on the Parish land on Langholme Lane, later this year.

13. On the training front, Councillors have attended virtual training courses on finance, Code of Conduct, planning and enforcement and also attended the re-vamped NLC virtual Town and Parish Council Liaison Meetings. The Parish Council has now fully established The Haxey Parish Neighbourhood Plan Working Group with a mixture of Residents and Councillors and the Chair and Vice Chair positions have both been filled by Residents. At its first meeting, it was decided that a decision on whether a Neighbourhood Plan would be appropriate for the Parish would be made once NLC had published their new Local Plan, expected to be put out for consultation in mid-May 21. The Parish Council’s input to the previous NLC Local Plan Consultation is available on the Haxey Parish Council website.

14. During the last year, the Parish Council has provided financial support to the Royal British Legion, CPRE, Haxey Primary School, LIVES, the Isle of Axholme Physically Handicapped Society, Westwoodside and Haxey Playing Fields, Haxey Tennis Club, South Axholme Academy Music Department and St Nicholas PCC; 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 Parish Over 70’s party, again had to be cancelled due to the pandemic situation.

15. 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; moreover, following the experiences of the last year, the Council understands and is aware that the provision of broadband connectivity to the Parish is not universally satisfactory and will continue to liaise with NLC and communications Contractors to improve the local service. 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. 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.

16. Finally, and most importantly, as life has been overtaken by the Coronavirus Pandemic situation and a second 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 updated information sheet for Residents, who are now experienced in the “New Normal”. The Parish Council has had to comply with the Government’s major alterations to the 1972 legislation governing Town and Parish Councils and has successfully 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. However, as the Government’s “Covid Roadmap” develops, the Parish Council awaits the decision from the Government on whether “virtual operations” for Town and Parish Councils will be allowed to continue or revert to “face to face” after 6 May2021.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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