

09 May 22

HAXEY PARISH COUNCIL – CHAIRMAN’S ANNUAL REPORT AND FUTURE PLANS – 2021/22

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 COVID pandemic continued through 2021 and despite the vaccination programme and Government direction to “live with the virus” it remains a serious national problem. Throughout, the Parish Council has met and continues to meet all its business and legislative commitments on time. This included the approval of the Internal Audit Report and submission of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR). The authority to use virtual means for meetings expired on 7 May 21 and whilst still utilising virtual applications to conduct Working Group meetings, the Parish Council reverted to face to face monthly meetings with the opportunity for the Public to be present. This necessitated the imposition of COVID 19 safety measures in the Function Room of the Foreman Carter Centre. During the reporting period, only one meeting of the Parish Council was cancelled. Despite continued lobbying, the Government has yet to legislate on the future routine use of virtual meetings for Parish and Town Councils.
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 2022/23 should again 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 2022/23. The Full Parish Council has adopted the Finance Committee’s recommendations. Also, this year, the Principal Authority has proposed a general Council Tax increase of 0.89% and a 2% social care precept, 1% for this year and 1% having been deferred from last. A total rise of 2.89%.
4. As in previous years, the Parish Council’s workload has been maintained with fulfilling legislative requirements, planning matters, including enforcement reporting, Parish Land Management and general Parish maintenance management. 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 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 NLC has, in general, been maintained, although due to the extra welfare demands on the Principal Authority, responses have inevitably slowed down. Parish consultations over the last year have included commenting on neighbouring area environmental and mineral plans and projects; various National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Surveys; local Drainage Board activity in the area and traffic and transport issues in our area; moreover, due to a NLC administrative error, the Parish Council has also re-submitted its recommendations for changes to the latest draft NLC Local Plan, aimed at setting the building activity in the Parish for the next 15 years. The Local Plan is still to be published. Whilst the standing Council agenda item on local “fracking activity” ceased last year, recent global events validate the continued monitoring of overall local hydro-carbon activity.

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, the regularisation of the Willow Fields site and the future of the Duke William Public House. Over the period, there has been a decrease in planning applications in the Parish and a general overview of applications reveals that during 2021/22 (April to March), the Parish Council considered a total of 80 Planning Applications, of which 34 were passed with or without comment and the Parish Council objected to 32. The Principal Authority agreed with the Parish Council’s objection on 9 applications, agreed with the Parish Council’s “no objection” on 45 applications and over-ruled the Parish Council’s objection in 12 cases. By 31 March 2022, 14 applications had yet to be decided by NLC and 2 applications had been sent to appeal, resulting in both being dismissed. Of note this last year, another Planning Application to re-develop the Duke William Public House site has been refused. The Asset of Community Value (ACV) restriction remains on the Duke William which has now closed for business and the Parish Council believes may have been sold.

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 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. On Parish Councillor changes, in November 2021, after 8 years, Councillor James Orton resigned from the Council and his replacement, Councillor Jerry Henwood, was co-opted at the February 2022 meeting.

8. The Parish Council Headquarters and the Foreman Carter (FC) Centre has reopened during the period and 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 emerged from “lock down”, the Centre and other Parish venues started to be used for limited activities. The improvement and maintenance programme for the Centre has continued: the sports container is scheduled to be repainted and the Fire Alarm system at the Centre has been updated to contact Committee Members by phone should the alarm activate. Research is also in hand to provide the centre with a “streaming” capability to enable virtual meeting attendees to join face to face meetings. 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 the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for Haxey High St, delayed by COVID, will be considered and hopefully adopted at the April 2022 Parish Council meeting. The repair work on the Greenhill wall has been completed satisfactorily and the initial refurbishment work on the monument has also been completed. The provision of electricity and up-lighting to the site is still ongoing due to the current in force power supply regulations and the number of agencies needed to be involved, not to mention the likely considerable cost. The Parish Council has also initiated a requirement for the provision of electricity/up-lighting at the War Memorial and the Haxey Pinfold.

10. Haxey Library has re-opened and is staffed primarily by local volunteers who are delivering a commendable service to the community and the mobile library continues to provide its visiting service to the Parish. Westwoodside Pond continues to experience problems with vermin, water condition and the electricity supply. The improvement to the pond drain is now planned into the NLC work programme and the Parish Council is in the process of purchasing a new upgraded aeration pump and the replacement of the electrical supply. The new signs encouraging Residents to take their refuse home and discouraging the feeding of the ducks have been erected, although as expected feeding of the ducks does continue. The removal of the silt from the pond continues to be a major project for the Parish Council to take forward following the completion of the drainage work. 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, although the area has been the subject of anti-social behaviour and damage necessitating Police, NLC Social Services and Community involvement. Following the comprehensive review by NLC, replacement and updating of the waste bins in the Parish has now commenced and the pandemic delayed NLC resurfacing programme for local roads has been re-started. Finally, the private venture installation of “Full Fibre to the Premises”(FTTP) to Haxey by KCOM has been completed

and although the installation was relatively quick, the resultant state of some pavements gives cause for concern and the Contractor is being pursued for remedial action by NLC.

11. Liaison with the Haxey Parish Allotment Association has continued and the site is also now operating normally. The Parish Council has recently arranged for the removal of a storm damaged tree on the highway side of the site. In the St Nicholas Closed Churchyard, the tri-annual safety survey and memorial rectification has now been completed and the Parish Cemetery on Church Lane has continued to be maintained. The “normal” Annual Armistice Remembrance Parades, supported by St Nicholas Church, Military Veteran organisations and the Lions took place on 11 and 14 November 2021 and once again there was an excellent local turn-out of young and old for both events. The Military Memorial Working Group re-commenced its activity with North Lindsey College to design and fabricate a Memorial to commemorate 3 WW2 Halifax aircraft and crews, which crashed in the Parish towards the end of the war with the loss of all on board. The Memorial has now been completed and funded in partnership with the College and the Parish Council. A relative of one of the crews has contacted the Parish Council about the Memorial Project and following the provision of the information gathered has indicated that the Family would be interested in attending the Dedication Service, currently planned for Autumn 2022. The Haxey Acting Townsman has agreed to Haxey Pinfold being used as the site for the Memorial and this should be formalised at a Haxey Mere Meeting planned for Easter Monday 2022.

12. 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’ sixth 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 continued the placement of “rustic” benches on major arteries of the Public Rights of Way. The Parish Council continues to support the NLC scheme to devolve and manage increasing elements of further grass cutting tasks in the Parish and beyond and the Council has again 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 area with the help of the Parish Handyman. As a result, the Communes in the Parish, as well as looking good, have again seen successes in the CPRE Best Kept Village Competition. Low Burnham won the Small Village Group and Best Community Planting and Haxey and Westwoodside again achieved joint third in the Large Village Group. The Parish Council will again support the CPRE competition for the coming year. The NLC “In Bloom” initiative also continues, which has again, enabled us to maintain the planting projects around the Parish; moreover the Council, working with NLC and the Woodland Trust, has arranged and completed the planting of around 1000 shrubs and trees on the Parish land on Langholme Lane Westwoodside. Work is currently in hand to provide accesses to the site with suitable wooden gates.

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 Chairman and Clerk have also attended monthly "Chairman and Clerk Chats" organised by ERNLLCA. Following the break caused by COVID, the Haxey Parish Neighbourhood Plan Working Group with a mixture of Residents and Councillors, Chaired and Vice-Chaired by Residents, has continued its preparatory work and is planning its first consultation event in the next 3 months.

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, the We Live Here Haxey Local Group 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, but is scheduled to return in 2022 during the events planned for the Platinum Jubilee period.

15. The Parish Council will carry on the work with plans in progress, particularly with the remaining 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 and other NLC devolution issues, currently under consideration; moreover, 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 identify ways to improve the local service and the preparations that will be required when Community analogue telephone land lines are digitised by 2025. 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. During the last year when life was overtaken by the Coronavirus Pandemic situation and associated lock-downs, 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.

17. Finally, the Clerk to the Parish Council has been congratulated on her recent award of the "General Power of Competence" (GPC) qualification which is an important legislative statement that Councils have the power to do anything an individual may do, unless specifically prohibited. The GPC is welcomed across the local government sector, as a wider statement of

Council's powers than the previous "wellbeing powers", which can be characterised as an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary change and give Haxey Parish Council more flexibility in the conduct of their operations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

18. 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.