

The Annual Meeting of the Denham Parish Council was held on Tuesday 16 May 2017 and was well attended by local residents. At the meeting the following reports of committees was received

Report from The Parish Council Chairman

I would like to start by thanking all my Councillor colleagues for their hard work and commitment to the Parish. Many residents are not aware that every Parish Councillor is an unpaid volunteer and without us being prepared to give our time and service freely to the Community the work of the Parish Council would cease. Also, whilst our staff get paid, they also give a fair amount of their time freely. So a big thank you to all of them.

I have been privileged to be voted Chairman of the Parish Council again this year, and like to think that is down to my leadership, although I suspect it is more a case of no-one else wanted to do the job!!

For those unaware of how the Parish Council works, a short explanation:-

All Parish Councillors sit on at least two committees and these committees debate issues that arise and how they should be dealt with. Those decisions then go to the monthly Parish meeting to be ratified by all Councillors. Once we have agreed the way forward, the Clerk is then requested to action those decisions.

We are currently recruiting 'Associates', people that live or work locally and can offer invaluable help but do not want to commit to attending all meetings. If you think that could be you, please talk to one of us.

Preparation for Unitary Re-organisation

Denham Parish Council has been preparing for what seems to be the inevitable restructuring of local government in Buckinghamshire. The only question is will it be a single authority or will it be two, one for the North and one for the South of Buckinghamshire?

It has been a challenging year and with further cuts inevitable from central government, whichever Unitary prevails, your Parish Council will face further devolving of services that we will have to manage and absorb into our budgets. In view of this we are already talking with adjoining Parish Councils to see if there would be any benefit in forming a Cluster Group to assist with 'economy of scale'.

The important thing is what will be best for Denham and its residents. Our experience over recent times is the difficulty in trying to get local problems resolved: items such as getting 'traffic lights' fixed, flooded gullies emptied, irresponsible parking on residential roads, long grass on the edge of Trunk roads cut, discarded litter picked and fly-tipping cleared.

This report only scratches the surface of the work being undertaken on your behalf by the Parish Council. HOWEVER, we can't do it alone. We need you to help us to help make Denham a more attractive and rewarding place to live. As you will hear from the committees, with the setting up of Our Befriending Service, Good Neighbour Scheme, Dementia Friendly Community programme and other initiatives, we need as many volunteers as we can possibly get. This Community belongs to all of us and we all need to play a part in it. Together we can make it better still if we all join in and '**be that person that cares**'.

Marilyn Heath
Chairman Denham Parish Council

Finance Committee Report

I'd like to give you a short run down on the major decisions proposed by the Finance Committee this past year: -

A detailed review of our budget requirements was taken for the next three years with particular attention paid to 'ear marking reserves' for items that regularly need funding. For instance, equipment in our play areas will probably need renewing after they've been in-situ 20 to 25 years, so in order that we don't have a large cost in one year we save a little each year towards the renewal bill by 'ear marking' that money in our reserves. This practice can make our reserves look high but it is monies accounted for.

We have also continued to maintain progress on the IT services in the office and moved to making on-line banking payments. This has reduced delays in payments once they have been approved by Council, and together with our accounting software package has made our bank reconciliations quicker with less queries arising due to delays in cheques being presented. We have stringent controls in place and our internal auditors will be in later this month, followed by external auditors some weeks later.

Due to the reduced monies from the government into the County & District Councils, the Parish Council has had to address more queries, complaints and requests coming in from residents. We have also been continually under pressure to respond to a large number of consultations and the increased workloads being handled by our committees has put extra pressure on our office staff. John Coleman, our Clerk & RFO (Responsible Finance Officer), is looking to retire so we are currently recruiting for a full time replacement because although John is part-time (3 days a week), the workload within Parish Councils has increased.

With all these factors in mind, our precept (portion of the rates) for this year has increased but only by the cost of a weekly postage stamp! Although the percentage looks high let me emphasize that we are still one of the lowest in South Bucks.

Clr Amarjeet Hans
Chairman Finance Committee Communities and Events Committee Report

Planning Committee Report.

Whilst the Parish Council is consulted by the District and County Councils on many planning matters, this is simply in an advisory capacity. With the benefit of local knowledge, the Parish Council endeavours to give practical and informed local views to South Bucks District Council and we hope that these are taken into consideration when they make their decisions. We are always keen to hear resident's views on developments occurring near them and encourage everybody to copy us in on any communication with South Bucks District Council, so that we are aware of your views and can consider them when preparing our response and comments.

The Inn on the Green development, now Landmark Place, is completed and the properties are selling fast, we do feel the new development adds a great deal to the area. The Denham film studio site on the North Orbital Road, is now under construction and they are already selling properties. The redevelopment includes 70 new houses, 105 apartments and the conversion of the film laboratory building into 49 new apartments, with the retention of the existing cinema for residents use. We understand a housing association will be taking a proportion of these properties as affordable housing, you will need to be registered with them to have an opportunity to apply for one though.

Many residents will be aware South Bucks and Chiltern District Council started the preparation of a new Local Plan in 2015 which is intended to guide the future development of the whole area until 2036.

As a Parish Council, we have voted to create our own Neighbourhood Plan. Once agreed and finalized it will enable us to have a greater impact and influence, on plans which come to us in the future. We have had an initial meeting but one thing we must have is more residents becoming involved.

A Neighbourhood plan will give us more influence on the use of land and associated social, economic and environmental issues along with consideration for housing, employment, transport and biodiversity. The plan would be used to influence development in the area, not to prevent it. The plan is not designed to directly address community issues but can be used to highlight them and to provide a vehicle to take them forward.

We need a Steering Group that consists of a cross section of residents from the various areas across the Parish. If you would like to help shape the future of planning in the Community in which you live or work, please do get in touch with the Clerk. The working party will be supported with all aspects of the development of the plan and planning knowledge is not essential, just a desire to see the best for your local area. We have produced a leaflet if you would like some more information on this.

Cllr. Sylvia Jefferys
Chairman Planning Committee

Report of The Communities & Events Committee

This committee organises a variety of events and introduces new initiatives into the Parish to be taken up by the wider community with the aid of volunteers.

Currently we are looking to establish Denham as a Dementia Friendly Community and to add a Befriending Service within our Good Neighbour Scheme. Both require local people to volunteer to join in and make them successful. If you feel you can offer any time, even if just for an hour a week, please contact us at the Parish office.

We are also in the process of updating our Parish Map and Street Guide to include the new housing development at the Denham Film Studios.

Our website is also undergoing change, with minutes of meetings, events, know your councillors pages etc. If you haven't had a look, please do so and feed any comments back to us whilst we are still in the development stage.

Events we have held this past year have been

Shakespeare on the Green: We held this to celebrate the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death. A local theatre company came and acted out scenes from a selection of his plays. This event was very successful and well attended.

Denham Green Christmas Fayre: This was the second year we have staged this event and it has been very successful. We have had good feedback and are looking for some local residents to help us organise it again this year.

Social Evening at Higher Denham: We held this to thank residents who have been involved with the Parish Council for all the free time they have given.

Tea Dances: We held the first of these last year to commemorate the Queen's 90th Birthday and around 60 elderly Denham residents attended. Music was provided by the Dolly Mixtures who got a lot of people up dancing. The second event was held a couple of weeks ago and we changed this slightly to a tea dance with Bingo which was also very successful and enjoyed by all.

Beating the Bounds:

This is a traditional annual event where we walk different sections of the parish boundary over a ten year period. It is always held on Rogation Sunday, the fifth Sunday after Easter.

Denham Village Fayre: Last year was our first year of running a stall. Just some hot drinks which gave us the opportunity to chat with residents. Our aim here is to be seen publicly and for anybody to drop by with any concerns and for us to recruit volunteers. We will be there again this year so do pop by and say hello.

Jazz on the Green: These events happen 3 or 4 times a year on a Sunday lunchtime in the summer months and is held on Denham Village Green. Very enjoyable occasions.

Forthcoming Events

Armed Forces Day: We are looking at holding our own event on Armed Forces Day on Saturday 24 June at 4pm in St Marys Churchyard. There will be a small service followed by a barbecue so please come along.

WWI Memorial: We have been provided with around 33 names of men who died in WWI not on our memorial and some extensive research has been done to see if they can be included. As there is no room on the present Memorial, the Parish Council are proposing to lay a plaque next to it for these men.

Cllr Sharon Williams
Chairman-Communities and Events Committee

Services Committee Report

A412 Footpath

Sometimes we are able to achieve a few 'quick wins' but more often it takes grit and determination over a long period to get a problem resolved. In 2012 BCC 'switched off' and removed the streetlights along Denham Avenue, despite a long campaign by the Parish Council and residents to retain them. We have fought to have footway lights installed on the stretch between Denham railway Station and Village Road and at the same time endeavoured to get a commitment to re-establish a 'fit for purpose footpath'. The Parish Council did take the initiative to clear this pathway earlier this year to make it more usable in the short term.

I am very pleased to report that following our representation to the House of Lords during the HS2 enquiry we were awarded £200,000 towards improvements to the A412 footpath. This will enable us to install lights and also do some minor works. We are still trying to get BCC to contribute funding to make the footpath fit for purpose as it is their responsibility.

Street Lights

A detailed survey of our street lights highlighted some major problems which were mainly age related. A number of them needed urgent attention with the rest being renewed this year. Whilst this has proved costly, money will be saved in the long run due to LED lights being more energy efficient and therefore less expensive to run. The new LED lights are also guaranteed for 25 years which will save even more money on maintenance costs.

Allotment Association

The Parish Council has approved the setting up of an 'Allotment Users Association'. We will still retain overall responsibility but would look to the AUA to debate issues arising and prioritise work required to be done in maintaining the site. We hope to establish the Association in time for the next growing season.

We have lobbied for some considerable time and finally got, a team from the Community Pay Back scheme (which comes FOC) to clear overgrown and uncared for plots making them fit to be rented by new tenants. We currently have 6 vacant plots on the site.

Alderbourne & Tilehouse Fields

Residents, no doubt, have seen with dismay the state of the Alderbourne and Tilehouse fields. They were maintained by the Parish Council and provided the space for football to be played etc. However, in 2013 BCC took the fields back into their control, under a review they carried out on the future use of all their land.

We have regularly lobbied BCC to release the fields (about 8 acres of leisure land) back into our care for community use as Denham residents have no access to any sizeable open space where sports can be played.

I am pleased to inform you that BCC have finally agreed to lease the land to the Parish Council for a long period at a peppercorn rent. We are also in discussions with the owner of the Old Mill Road Field and are hoping that we can get a similar agreement on that land in order to provide access and parking for the future.

We aim to restore the land into an area for casual use where informal games or sports can be enjoyed by residents and to then investigate a more permanent provision of leisure and recreational facilities for the future. This will mean attracting Grant Funding from various Sports and Leisure organisations.

Devolved Services

To finish we would like to remind residents of the devolved services the Parish Council provides:-

Namely grass cutting in 30mph residential roads. Please note, we cannot cut central reservations or visual splays and verges that abut 40mph and 50mph 'A' roads such as the A40 and A412 that require traffic management and remain the responsibility of the County Council's Transport Division (TfB).

Other devolved services include Rights of Way clearance on 14 footpaths in Denham, Siding out of footpaths, where grass encroaches on to it, narrowing the path. Sign Cleaning within 30mph roads and other general maintenance.

Marilyn Heath

Chairman Services Committee