

Chairman of Ruskington Parish Council (RPC) Annual Report for 2018/19 from Cllr P N Dean

As Chairman of the Parish Council it is my duty to produce a report on the activities of the Council during the year, this report covers some of these activities and those involved.

Staff

There were changes to members of staff during the year, following the resignation of the RFO, Mrs Anna Lawson in September 2018, there followed a period of advertising and selection before Ms Kirsty Sinclair was appointed and she started work for the RPC in November 2018. The former Parish Clerk, Mr Eddie Findlay resigned in January 2019 and following the full recruiting process Mrs Kathryn Locke was appointed to the role of Parish Clerk and Proper Officer in January 2019. I would like to thank all staff for their commitment and hard work during the year.

Councillors

It is with sadness that I note the loss of one member of the Parish Council during the period that being Cllr John Carroll who died after a short illness in September 2018. John was the Vice Chairman and very active within the Council and the sub-committees he was also an avid supporter of the Hospital Volunteer Car Service and I am proud to be able to record his total commitment and support to the Ruskington Parish Council.

As I wrote the report last year there was one vacancy on the Council and following the co-option process Cllr Scott Johnstone became a member shortly after and Cllr Ron Langley stepped forward to fill the vacancy left by the loss of Cllr Carroll.

I would like to thank all Councillors for their efforts during the year especially the Chairmen of the various Committees, who through the stewardship of these committees have helped to drive the direction of the whole Council.

Finance

Council finances remain in a good and stable state enabling us to meet our commitments and obligations to the community. The achievement of this objective is thanks to the policies adopted over many years. This year the RPC was faced with the total withdrawal of the Central Government Support Grant coupled with the contracting of a village Enforcement Officer in August resulted in a precept increase of 11.9% or under 20p per week for a typical Band D property.

Audit

The Councils annual audit of both its finances and systems is carried out by internal and external auditors. At this date only the internal audits has been completed for which we have received a sound report and anticipate the same assessment by the external auditor. It is to the credit of both the Parish Clerks, Mr Eddie Findlay and Mrs Kathryn Locke and Responsible Finance Officers and particularly Ms Kirsty Sinclair that the necessary records are maintained to a high standard which contributed to the Council obtaining a clean bill of health in these

areas. The RPC also wishes to acknowledge the contribution made by our Internal Auditor, Mr Ian Sismey who has provided timely sage advice during the year.

Freedom of Information and Data Protection

There have been no requests under the Freedom of Information regulations made to the RPC and no data has been lost or compromised during the year. The RPC have continued to retain a specialist provider to guide us through the requirements and to act as the Data Protection Officer.

Hospital Car Voluntary Service (HCVS)

This continued as a much appreciated village service. I wish to place on record the Council's appreciation for the major contribution made by Councillor Tony Dixon as Chairman of the HVCs committee and to Mrs Linda Gardner the senior co-ordinator. I would also thank those who deputise as co-ordinator, the committee and especially the drivers for their continued interest and support. The mileage rate charge to patients was maintained as was the RPC contribution. Of concern however is the number of registered drivers which we would like to increase to ensure that the resource is big enough to cover the demands of the residents.

Other Matters

Litter

The village continued to suffer the problem of unsightly litter being deposited on public paths, highways, open spaces and The Beck. Our operatives spend much time collecting this waste but we are also fortunate that a number of public spirited individuals also assist by helping collect this waste in Horseshoe Hollow and the sports field. Along with these volunteers The Rotary Club of Sleaford Kesteven has visited the village for the last few years on Rotary Day and as part of their community service have also had a task force litter picking, my thanks to all. In addition, the RPC appointed a Home Office Licensed Enforcement Officer who can deal with a range of matters including littering and anti-social behaviour. To this end he has issued a number of Fixed Penalty Notices for littering during the period and the RPC has awarded his contract until March 2021.

Dogs

Further dog waste (litter) bins have been installed in the village in an attempt to improve the correct disposal of waste by dog owners, however, some dog owners are still not picking up their dog's waste. The sports field remains a particular problem and fouling could lead to football matches being cancelled as the pitches could be declared as unfit for play, or can in certain circumstances cause Toxocariasis which can lead to blindness which can be avoided if the dog waste is collected and deposited properly in these waste bins. Dog waste can also be deposited in any of the normal litter bins around the village, or taken home and put in a person's grey wheelie bin. Dogs not on a lead add to the problem contrary to the signage at the Sports Field and the standing By-law requiring dogs to be on a lead.

Cemetery

The Cemetery is still high on the agenda and a number of policies and improvements have been made to try and maximise the availability of plots but the fact remains however, that space is at a premium and the useful life of the cemetery is limited, the RPC continues to

monitor the situation closely and is actively looking for suitable land to provide a new facility although with the current regulations concerning burial grounds the Council is not hopeful of fulfilling the desire.

Recreation

This year we have supplemented the play equipment at the Elmtree and Parkfield sites and we were fortunate to secure additional funding from the Onestop business in support of the local community. Furthermore, the RPC was supported by Tesco Sleaford and a £2000 grant has been awarded for more equipment at the Elmtree site focussed more towards older children. A team of young people National Citizen Service (NCS) spent nearly two weeks in the village last summer and accomplished a considerable amount of work at the Hillside Play Area contributing to the refurbishment of the equipment, weeding and the laying of the new bark surface all this was undertaken during the period of high temperatures and harsh sun, a big thank you to the NCS team. The Recreation Sub-committee led by Cllr Keith White have also been heavily engaged on a major project to enhance the sports facilities at the Parkfield Road Sports Field progressing plans to provide a Multi-use Games Area (MUGA) that is capable of use in all weathers and gives the possibility of an area for 5-a-side football, Walking football and Netball with the additional benefit of giving a further training area for the Ruskington Lions.

Best Kept Village

In 2018 the village was not entered in this competition due to changes on the Council and within the Environment Committee however, the RPC does believe that taking part in the competition gives a focus to the Council and more importantly the wider community to look after and enhance our environment and as such has entered the 2019 competition. I feel sure that the community would like to make the most of this opportunity and at least improve on the score we received in 2017 however, I feel sure we would all like to win so we look forward to your support. Judging takes place in 3 rounds between May and September.

Council Meetings and News.

All members of the public are welcome to attend any of the Council or Committee meetings. The full Council meet eleven times per year, on the last Tuesday night of the month at the Winchelsea Centre at 7pm. Information on forthcoming Council and Committee meetings can be seen on the Council Notice board outside the Winchelsea Centre and on the Council Facebook page. Notes from these meetings are available on the Parish Council Website www.parishes.lincolnshire.gov.uk Ruskington. Additional news can be found on our Facebook page.

Signpost Magazine

The Council supports the production on a quarterly basis of the Signpost magazine which brings news about the village and council. Copies of the magazine can be found in the council offices, the library, medical centre, the Coop and other areas in the village. Kirsty Sinclair has taken on the role of Editor in addition to but separate from her RFO duties. So thank you Kirsty and if you have any items for inclusion they will be very well received at the Parish Office.

Summary

I would like to thank staff, Councillors and volunteers in the village for all they do to make the village such a good and desirable place to live.

Paul Dean
Chairman
Ruskington Parish Council
28 May 2019