

Chairman of Ruskington Parish Council (RPC) Annual Report for 2017/18 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 was one change to members of staff during the year, following the resignation of the RFO, Ms Tess Stopper in December 2017. There followed two rounds of advertising and selection before Mrs Anna Lawson was appointed and she started work for the RPC in March 2018. I would like to thank all staff for their commitment and hard work during the year.

Councillors

I would like to thank former Councillors Mrs Rosemary Segebarth, Mr Peter Elkington and Mr Adam Hicks, who all retired from the Council during the year, for their tireless support and hard work in a variety of areas.

Members of the Ruskington community have come forward to replace two of the ensuing Councillor vacancies and I hope they find their time on the Council rewarding. Welcome to Councillors, Neil Davies and Patrick Reid. The remaining vacancy is, at the time of writing, being advertised for the co-option of a new member.

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. Cllr Keith White stood down as Chairman of the Council in October 2017 and I would like to add specific thanks to him for his display of zeal and enthusiasm that was a mark of his tenure over his 3 and a half years as Chairman. I would also thank the replacement Vice Chairman of the Council, Councillor John Carroll who has ably assisted me and acted as an outstanding support.

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. A further reduction in the Central Government Support Grant, which is likely to be moved totally by 2020, resulted in a precept increase to 3.4%. This increase was also due in part to the desire of the RPC to improve the play equipment at the Elmtree and Parkfield sites. The equipment has been ordered and we are hopeful that it will be installed by the school summer holidays 2018.

Audit

The Council's annual audit of both its finance 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 an unqualified report and anticipate the same assessment by the external auditor. It is to the credit of both Responsible Finance Officers, Mrs Tess Stopper and Mrs Anna Lawson and the Parish Clerk, Mr Eddie Findlay, that the necessary records are maintained to

a high standard which contributed to the Council obtaining a clean bill of health in these areas.

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. GDPR has been a challenge for the Council as for many other organisations however, the RPC have retained a specialist to guide us through the requirements and to act as the Data Protection Officer. There is a cost for this service which is modest and has not been an impact on the precept.

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 HCVS 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 increased by 2p this year with a commensurate reduction in the RPC contribution. Whilst the budget remains the same this will ensure that more people can access the service without an increase to the precept.

Other Matters

Litter

The village continues 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. 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.

Dogs

Additional dog waste 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, but could 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 was originally opened in the late 19th century and we now approaching the stage when we will have to close it for fresh burials. Current legislation does not allow us to re use burial plots. To try and extend its life we have now stopped allowing the internment of non-residents and we have removed a number of trees and shrubs to try and release more plots for future burials. The Council is also considering the cessation of burials, with only the

interment of ashes in order to extend the life of the Cemetery. The RPC continues to seek suitable land for a new cemetery however, the geology of the Parish coupled with the environmental requirements make this possibility less likely.

Best Kept Village

In 2017 the village was again entered in this competition and although we did not win we did improve our score. Due to the changes on the Council and within the Environment Committee it was felt that to enter the competition for 2018 would place too higher burden on the Council staff and volunteers so year out was agreed and an entry into the 2019 competition recommended. I would like to thank all who helped and will help again this year including Councillors Fryer and Segebarth, Council employees and many members of the public.

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 edits and produces on a quarterly basis 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. Tess Stopper stood down as editor in December and the spring issue was compiled by Cllr Carroll and myself to ensure publication. The Signpost still requires a dedicated editor to secure its future and the Parish Office would be delighted to hear from anyone who is interested in the production of the magazine.

Summary

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

Paul Dean
Chairman
Ruskington Parish Council
29 May 2018