

Annual Report Burton Overy Parish Council 2017/2018

Financial:

The precept is a grant to the Parish to enable it to carry on its work and is raised through the council tax levied by Harborough District Council. The precept has been raised again for the current financial year by £1,000 and now stands at £8,000. The increase is needed to enable the Council to meet continuing challenging changes required by law (some of which are mentioned below), employing a clerk and meeting rising costs to the service the Parish Council provides particularly with regard to the provision of street lighting.

In accordance with regulation the Parish Council's financial statements and returns, governing documents, agendas and minutes are available to view on The Parish Council website: www.burtonoverypc.org.uk

Councillors:

Councillor Tim Ramsey has resigned from the Council due to the difficulty of combining the role of being an effective councillor with increasing work commitments. Sincere thanks are due to Tim for his work on the Council including involvement with the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. The casual vacancy that arose as a result of Tim's resignation has been filled by Sarah Rankine who was co-opted to the Council in April. Sarah has recently retired from her teaching post as Head of Nursery at Radcliffe College and is ready to take on a new challenge as a parish councillor. I would like to thank Sarah for agreeing to take on this role.

A very big thank you is also due to the continuing councillors comprising Carolyn Carson, Mark Firth and David Fletcher. These councillors continue to give valuable time and commitment to the Parish Council despite the pressures of their own working commitments.

Neighbourhood Plan:

The Burton Overy Neighbourhood Plan when made will form part of the basis for planning decisions applicable to Burton Overy Parish up to 2031. The plan sets out a vision and planning policy that aims to help shape future development in Burton Overy. The plan focuses on planning issues which consultation shows matter most to this community. These include policies that:

- Ensure that housing development takes place in the most sustainable locations, is of the right quantity and type and does not harm the existing and historic character of the village;
- Encourage the right types of development that meet local needs;
- Protect important buildings and structures of historic and architectural interest;
- Protect community facilities;

- Promote high quality design in new development which enhances the Parish's special character and identity;
- Protect the countryside and special landscape and where possible improve biodiversity and important habitats; and
- Protect open spaces that are important to the community and/or wildlife

The Neighbourhood Plan has now been submitted to Harborough District for the next phase in the statutory consultation process. It has got to this stage following a tremendous amount of work and commitment from the parishioners involved in the process but most particularly because of the leadership given by Mark Firth as Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Many thanks are due to the people who have helped in the process but most of all we need to recognise the responsibility, hard work and commitment not to mention tact and resilience shown by Mark throughout this process.

Planning:

The Parish Council takes time and care over its response to planning applications that affect the Parish. There have been a number of challenging applications within the Parish in the past year. The Neighbour Plan although still in draft form has helped to shape and guide as well as to encourage consistency in our response to those applications.

We have also considered and where appropriate responded to applications and consultations which although outside the Parish will have an impact on Burton Overy. These include developments in Great Glen most particularly the Miller Homes Oaks Road planning application.

We have continued to monitor and respond to Harborough District Councils drafting of the district wide plan. We have considered and responded to the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan which could have serious implications for our area including the proposed A46 Expressway and the development that will accompany it.

Tree Warden Scheme:

Tree wardens are a national force of local volunteer tree champions and a key part of The Tree Council's Community Action Programme. The Tree Warden Scheme gives people who feel that trees matter an opportunity amongst other things to:

- Champion their local trees and woods
- Plant and care for trees
- Survey Trees
- Provide early warning of threats, disease, decay or vandalism
- Get together with like-minded people for training and field trips
- Champion Tree Council initiatives such as its Hedge Tree Campaign to reverse the decline of trees and hedges

Tree Wardens also have access to trees at reduced costs and sometimes at no cost, at certain times of the year.

The Parish Council has appointed Neil Phillips to the role of tree warden for Burton Overy. Neil has 18 years of experience as the Tree Warden for Great Glen.

Burton Overy village is a Conservation Area and this designation recognises that the character of the area is worthy of preserving and enhancing. With regard to trees we are keen to encourage residents to replant a suitable tree in an appropriate location in place of one that is felled with conservation area consent. With the support and help of the tree warden we hope to encourage the maintenance of the biodiversity and landscaping which is so important to our Parish.

Freedom of Information and Data Protection:

The Freedom of Information Act provides the public with greater transparency in the operation of Public Authorities which includes Parish Councils. In addition all Parish Councils fall within the scope of the new General Data Protection Regulations which come into force on 25 May 2018. The Parish Council is required to take steps to ensure compliance with those regulations. The Parish Council needs policies to include the collecting, processing and sharing of personal data, controlling access to personal data and a Freedom of Information publication scheme.

With the guidance of our national and local association of local authorities and the hard work of our clerk Kate Barker we are well on the way to having the necessary procedures in place. These include the drafting of appropriate policies and the setting up of individual Councillor webmail accounts.

Parish Council Clerk:

Because of increasing regulation and frequent changes in the law practice and procedures the work of the parish clerk has become more demanding. Parish Clerks are regarded as professionals and are expected to keep up to date with changes in regulation and procedure and when appropriate attend training courses. It is a statutory office and the role includes giving legal and financial advice to the Parish Council. The clerk's job is to ensure the Council as a whole conducts its business properly and to provide independent, objective and professional advice. Our clerk Kate Barker is doing a great job for the Parish. This last year has seen Kate achieve much for the Council including preparing for the changes required in respect of Data Protection and Freedom of Information, handling the new practices required to comply with the regulations for transparency, auditing and good governance and maintaining and adding value to the Parish Council website. Kate works extremely hard and very efficiently for the Parish Council and I would like to express our grateful thanks for her excellent work.

Miscellaneous

The Parish Council assets including notice boards and benches require a certain amount of maintenance. Nick Jones one of our parishioners mainly carries out this work for us. I would like to say a big thank you to Nick for the work he does in this respect.

The Parish Council continues to liaise with the appropriate authorities in respect of the state of the roads, fly tipping and the repair and maintenance of the streetlights. Efforts are continuing to convert streetlights to LED lamps where possible.

Plans for the coming year:

Work and monitoring will continue on the Neighbourhood Plan as it proceeds through the statutory phases.

We will continue to keep up to date and respond where necessary to the new local plan, the changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan and any other relevant consultations.

We will monitor our progress and compliance and take action where necessary with regard to the General Data Protection Regulation and Freedom of Information.

The position with regard to the streetlights will be kept under review as we continue to work towards modernization with LED lights and ultimately adoption by the County Council.

Fran Brown
Chairman
16 May 2018