

Whatton-in-the-Vale Parish Council Chairman's Annual Review and Annual Return 2008/9

Introduction

2008/9 was the second year of this Council and my second year as Chairman; I would like to thank my fellow members for their commitment help and support during the last year. All members deserve a vote of thanks for the work and effort they have put in to their council responsibilities this year, as does our Clerk whose wealth of experience has been a great help during the year.

Communications and Community Engagement

This council recognises the importance of communication, public involvement and transparency in the work of you parish council and have built on the measures taken last year:

- As reported last year we:
 - Included an open session at every meeting where members of the public can voice there concerns or suggestions on issues affecting the Parish.
 - Published a Newsletter to keep residents informed about the work of the Parish Council and issues affecting the Parish. We have continued and will continue to publish that newsletter at least four times a year.
- This year we have continued to improve our Community Engagement strategy with the launch of our own Parish Council web site in February 2009.
- The Council have also resolved to hold 'surgeries' when at least one parish councillor will be available. It is expected that the surgeries will commence in June, the dates will be published in the Newsletter and on the web site:
 - At the fortnightly coffee mornings at the Jubilee Hall on a Friday, between 10 am and 12 noon and;
 - Once a month on a Saturday morning at the Jubilee between 10 am and 12 noons.

Precept and Budget

We published the budget and the level of precept in our Newsletter. In the main our total income is derived from the precept.

In setting the precept for 2009/10 we had to consider a number of factors:

- Advice from the District Auditor as to the level of our General Reserve – this should be equal to our annual revenue expenditure which is currently in the region of £8,500. As reported last year previous Councils had not followed this principle, so we are playing 'catch-up' and clearly we can

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only do that over time. Our budget envisages a General Reserve of £2,830 at the end of 2009/10 compared with a target of £8,075.

- The level of the Playing Field reserve – we are in partnership with Aslockton Parish Council in respect of the Playing Field. As reported last year previous councils have not maintained the same level of provisioning that our partners Aslockton Parish Council have so again we are playing 'catch-up'. At the end of 2009/10 will anticipate a Playing Fields Reserve of £2,500, against a target of £3,500.
- The need for a Capital Reserve – we started last year to build a Capital Projects Reserve. We have continued to build the reserve further this year by allocating £500.
- The need to maintain and improve services to our residents.
- The current financial situation

Despite increases in some of our costs the Council resolved to maintain the precept for 2009/10 at last years level of £10,855.

Planning

The local planning authority is only obliged to 'take note' of our comments or objections. We take planning applications very seriously and encourage residents to attend our meetings when planning applications are discussed. Where we object to planning applications we have do so purely on planning issues.

This year has seen two contentious applications:

- The White Villa, Dark Lane
 - A further application for 11 dwellings was made in May 2008. The Parish Council objected vigorously to application as did a number of local residents. The Local Planning Authority (Rushcliffe Borough Council) refused permission. The developer appealed the decision and that appeal was rejected in December 2008.
 - An application for OUTLINE permission is now being sought. The application is broadly in line with the Outline permission granted in 2006.
- Horticultural Development on Grantham Road.

An application to use land west of Greenacres on the Grantham Road for horticultural business, including the construction of a barn, poly-tunnels, parking, access and recycling area. The application included the removal of a number of trees. The Parish Council and a number of residents objected to the application. Rushcliffe Borough Council refused the application.

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Playing Field

The Parish Council jointly owns the Playing Field with Aslockton Parish Council and in May 2006 signed a deed of dedication with the National Playing Fields Association (now Fields in Trust) effectively creating a trust and ensuring that the Playing Field remained a recreational facility in perpetuity. Whatton-in-the-Vale Parish Council and Aslockton Parish Council is the sole trustee and day to day management of the facility is devolved to the Whatton and Aslockton Playing Field Committee, to which the Parish Council has a right to appoint two members.

The Play Equipment project was completed in February of 2009 with the installation of the equipment of the under 6's. This phase was funded jointly by Whatton-in-the-Vale Parish Council, Aslockton Parish Council and the Playing Field Committee. The contribution (£3,750) from your Parish Council was funded from the Playing Field Reserve.

Grass Cutting

Technically we are only responsible for the Green in front of Ivy Row, the verges are the responsibility of the Highways Authority and the amenity spaces (the areas at the end of Azimnghur Road and Green Walk) are the responsibility of Rushcliffe Borough.

A programme was set up in 2006/07:

- The Green in front of Ivy Row;
- The Green by Green Walk;
- Verges on Beverley's Avenue, Cottage Avenue and Green Walk;
- The Green are at the Junction of Dark Lane and Grantham Road;
- The verges at the Junction of Main Street and Grantham Road;
- The verges along Grantham Road to Orston Lane; and
- The verges around the Green in front of Ivy Row.

Rushcliffe Borough Council has informed us that they will cut the Green on Green Walk twelve times a year. The Parish Council believes that it is pointless to continue to include that area in our cutting schedule and we are currently considering areas that are not currently maintained adequately where the spare cutting capacity can be usefully employed.

Footpaths

There have been a number of problems in relation to rights of way in our Parish. The Parish Council do not have many powers in respect of Rights of Way; they are owned and maintained by the Local

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Highways Authority (Nottinghamshire County Council). The Parish Council will continue to lobby the County Council in respect of the problems in the Parish.

The Parish Council has in 2008/9 lobbied Nottinghamshire County Council in respect of three Public Rights of Way in the parish and has been relatively successful.

- Whatton Footpath 1 (Blackberry Hill):
 - The introduction of a stile on the footpath made access difficult – the stile and now been removed.
 - The closure of the 'farmers' bridge meant that users had to use the old footbridge – the old bridge has now been replaced.
- Whatton Footpath 15 (Whatton to Aslockton – Church Walk):
 - Following representations from the Parish Council a new road stone surface was applied to the portion of the footpath that runs along Church Walk.
- Whatton Footpath 13 (Dark Lane to 'Machins' bridge):
 - An unregulated trough at the edge of the footpath was causing the right of way to be constantly flooded – following representations from the Parish Council the trough was removed.
- The Parish Council has reasserted its wish to join the Parish Paths Partnership.

Quality Council Status

The Parish Council has reviewed the criteria for achieving *Quality Council* status. Members believe that Whatton-in-the-Vale Parish Council meets the requirements to achieve *Quality Council* accreditation and the Clerk is currently collating the evidence required to support our application.

Power of Well-Being

Parish Council powers and duties are limited to those explicitly granted by Parliament in various acts.

Section 137 of the Local Government Act allows parish councils to spend a limited amount on activities for which it has no specific powers. Section 137 is limited in scope and the level of finance that may be applied. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 added that the benefit obtained should be commensurate with the expenditure incurred, clearly a highly subjective test.

The 'Power of Well-being' (PWB) was introduced to Principal local authorities (District and County Councils) in 2000. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 extended the use of the PWB to parish and town councils. The Statutory Instrument to bring the PWB into force for parish

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and town councils was laid before Parliament on the 9th December 2008 and came into force on the 31st December 2008.

The PWB basically allows parish and town councils to do anything they consider likely to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area unless explicitly prohibited elsewhere in legislation. It is clearly a useful and extremely flexible power without the limitations of Section 137.

The PWB is not automatically available to parish and town councils; they must explicitly resolve to use the power and may only do so if they meet certain conditions. Once the PWB is adopted by the parish council it will only be valid during the lifetime of the Council, i.e. the power must be adopted by each new council upon its election.

Whatton-in-the-Vale meets the criteria to adopt the power, subject to councilors attending a training course on the use of the power.

The council has resolved that all councilors will attend the training course and it is the intention of the Parish Council to adopt the Power of Well-Being once the training requirement has been satisfied.

GR Redford
Chairman – Whatton-in-the-Vale Parish Council
May 2009

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ANNUAL RETURN FOR YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2009

Description	Receipts and payments		Variance on prior year	
	2007/2008	2008/2009	Amount	%
Balances brought forward	£6,213.61	6,311.47	£97.86	1.6
Annual precept	£8,515.00	£10,705.00	£2,190	25.7
Total other receipts ¹	£300.87	£26,208.86	£25,907.99	8611.0
Staff and admin. costs	£2,970.00	£3,240.00	270.00	9.1
Loan interest/Capital repayments	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.0
Total other payments ²	£5,748.00	£37,228.08	£31,480.07	547.0
Balances carried forward ³	£6,311.47	£2,757.25	(£3,554.22)	(56.3)

¹Total other receipts for 2008/2009 include £22,957 grants in respect of children's play equipment on the playing field.

²Total other payments for 2008/2009 include £26,424.94 in respect of the purchase of children's play equipment for the playing field.

³The Balance carried forward for 2008/2009 of £2,757.25 is net of a figure of £5,173.82 for VAT Input tax for which a claim for refund has been made to Her Majesties Customs and Inland Revenue.