**ADDINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

**Annual Parish Meeting 19 May 2021**

**Report of the Chairman of the Parish Council**

In spite of restrictions on activity and repeated lockdowns, we’ve had a busy year, and I have a lot to tell you about. Perhaps even more than usual, since covid even stopped us from having an annual meeting at all in 2020. So I am delighted to bring you up to date with everything today. But first, some personal news.

As many of you already know, I am standing down from the role of Chairman, and this will be my last opportunity to talk to you in this role. I have enjoyed working for the village alongside my fellow councillors all these years, but it is now time to give someone else a go!

But now, turning to what we’ve been doing over the last year or so.

One of our major achievements, of course, has been the setting up of our new community Hub. Although closed for much of 2020, the Hub had already proved a popular go-to venue for community group meetings and for social drop-ins. As things re-open, we will be focusing on rebuilding interest in this wonderful facility. Linked with the library - literally with the indoor staircase, and with so many opportunities for shared activities – the Hub, sitting in the heart of the village, is the Council’s main physical interface with the community.

But it is not only a physical interface. The development of the Parish Council Heritage Archive in the Hub has been able to continue throughout lockdowns. We have continued with the programme of digitising our archived records and will be making them available online to everyone in the coming months. This is an exciting project – we may not have been able to show you what we’ve been doing by mounting exhibitions in the Hub, but we’ve had regular displays in the Library window to tide us over, and we’ll now be planning some major relaunch exhibitions in both the Hub and the Memorial Hall to bring it all together.

This is all part of our ongoing initiatives to make much greater use of new technology to bring our services to the village. We are putting gallery photos on our website to support our physical displays. We have updated our website to provide an online booking system for both the Hub and our sports facilities and for other information and digital services. And, of course, the councillors are always happy to pick up emails and posts from Quack to keep up with what’s going on. Feel free to contact us, share any concerns and tell us how we’re doing.

It almost goes without saying, but a vital part of all this is the support the Parish Council offers to village networks, such as the Civic Society. We continue to work actively with their members, not least in our joint production of a twice-yearly village newsletter, and we are supporting the environment group’s activities and its 4Becks project. We have helped in taking forward some of the group’s ideas for improvements, such as planting schemes on the Hoffman Wood field.

Our support for the Civic Society’s Good Neighbours group is worth particular mention after this horrid year. I particularly want to thank all the Good Neighbours Covid support group volunteers, who continue to work tirelessly within the community to help others. The Parish Council is there to play its part in any way we can with such community initiatives.

One such that has continued to take up our time and energy in spite of the lockdowns has been the Neighbourhood Plan. The approval of our own Plan at referendum in 2019 was by no means the end of the process, and, with Bradford now engaged on redoing their Local Plan, we have to be ready to provide constant input to their consultations, as well as keeping a careful eye on the adjustments that will inevitably need to be made to our document. This is all on top of the work we are doing behind the scenes, with the help of volunteers on our Review Group, to implement the Plan’s policies where we can. We have recently had cause to bring forward one of the recommendations in the Plan – for the provision of a bike track for children. We’ll be consulting on options for this shortly. Future plans for investment by the Council in village improvements may well include further developments near the War Memorial and at the Sugar Hill site.

Meanwhile, also behind the scenes, we have continued managing Council-owned land and the village facilities we run - whether they’ve been open in the pandemic or closed during the lockdown periods. The allotments and public toilets have largely remained open throughout, and maintenance works, as well as tenant changeovers at the allotments, have had to be handled. Our other assets, such as the MUGA, pavilion, bowling green and children’s playground at the Memorial Hall have been closed, but still need attention and investment, particularly after a winter of freezing pipework and plumbing leaks! We also own the play areas at the Silsden Rd recreation ground and Hoffman Wood which have remained open. Managing assets is a costly business, but, unlike larger councils, we do not have teams of in-house maintenance staff who can be despatched to fix, mend and do, when things break or go wrong. Most of the time, we have to organise contractors and pay for minor maintenance works as and when required. We are very fortunate, however, in having so many of our councillors willing to give their time on a voluntary basis towards the upkeep of our assets – this helps enormously for us in keeping costs down and managing our services effectively. My thanks to all of the councillors, especially those on the Property & Maintenance Committee.

Much of the rest of the year has been spent for the Council on progressing long term business initiatives. One particular focus of mine has been the ongoing negotiations with Bradford to see much-needed traffic safety improvements introduced into the village. I have personally worked to drive this forward, meeting senior highways officers and talking to our local MP in an effort to press for action in key areas. I am hopeful that these efforts will bear fruit in the coming months, and although I am resigning from the Council, I will continue to be involved in this work to see it through.

I’ll end on this positive note, as we all look forward to life after the pandemic, working together and with all residents to get things done for Addingham so we can continue making it a better place to live in for all of us.