

HENLOW PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL MEETING 2017

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – 24th APRIL 2017

In a year that has seen significant changes of personnel within Henlow Parish Council I feel it only appropriate to begin by thanking all the Councillors who have given up their time and energy for the benefit of our Parish. During my time on the Council, I have been impressed by the effort, time and selflessness that all of the members of Council devote to our village. All of the Councillors work hard to ensure that Henlow is moving in the right direction. This year we said goodbye to Cllrs Dixon, Matthews and Barker. I personally would like to thank Steve, Lee and Mary for their hard work and efforts and I wish them all the best in the future. Following the resignation of Cllr Barker, we welcomed Cllr Jenny Sapiano. There will be an election held on the 4th May for the two current vacancies and I wish all the candidates standing for the election every success with their campaigns.

We are now very fortunate to have a policeman, a farmer, an IT consultant for a major supermarket, two Ward Councillors, a kitchen designer, an events manager, a retired administrator, a partner in a kitchen design company and a personal assistant sitting on Henlow Parish Council. Each and every Councillor brings different work and life experiences, giving Henlow Parish Council a great joint perspective with which to move forward. Thank you to each and every one of you for giving up your time and efforts over the last year.

Henlow Parish Council decided at their meeting on 9th January 2017 to increase the precept from £131,474 to £163,280. A public meeting held on 12th September 2016 to discuss the closure of RAF Henlow in 2020, showed that many residents wished for continued access to the numerous facilities that have been made available to the community over the years. The Parish Council are now looking to register these facilities as 'Assets of Community Value'. This would allow community based groups the right of first refusal to bid to acquire such assets, if an owner ever decides to dispose of them. Acquiring these assets could be expensive and this is the reason why the Parish Council agreed to increase the precept by 25% to allow borrowings of up to £500,000 to acquire these facilities. This rise in precept equates to a rise of 41p per week on a band D property.

A working party formed of Councillors from Henlow and Stondon have recently met to discuss the closure of Henlow Camp and what assets may be considered. At the first meeting nothing was formally agreed although a good general discussion took place. The plan moving forward is to visit Henlow Camp, make a comprehensive list of potential assets and report this back to the Full Council. Any decisions made will not be rushed and careful consideration will be given to all possibilities.

There have been a number of planning applications considered by Henlow Parish Council within 2016-2017. Each application is looked at very carefully, considering planning matters and the views and thoughts of you, the Parishioners. We have had significant applications by Gladmans at Langford Road and the Land North of Arlesey Road by Crest Nicholson. Henlow Parish Council raised very robust objections to both applications and CBC refused both. We have very recently seen a further pre-application made for the land adjacent to the Millennium Meadow. Sarah King from ATK planning presented the proposed outline plans to a number of residents and Henlow Parish Council. We will make sure to keep our website and Facebook page up to date with any developments on these significant applications.

I am pleased to report that both The Pavilion and Parish Hall bookings are doing very well. We have a number of regular groups, clubs and organisations that book throughout the year. Both facilities allow the opportunity for all ages to socialise and enjoy various activities. I have personally been to a number of groups and it is wonderful to see so many happy faces in and around the Parish. We have carefully considered the costing for both venues as well as the football pitches and changing room hire. We have slightly raised the prices to hire these facilities this year - I hope you will agree this is only minimal and allows for the costs of maintenance and wear and tear to be adequately covered.

The Railway in Henlow Camp benefited from a brand new Space Net. I think it's fair to say that this has been a success and is used by many. The installation of this piece of play equipment formed a timely reminder that Henlow Parish Council has a duty to ensure all the play equipment within the Parish is regularly safety checked. This was robustly done by an appropriate organisation and, where necessary, parts were replaced, fixed or taken away all together. Should you have any concerns regarding any equipment, please report it to Mandy, The Clerk.

Cllr Flint continues to work hard on all aspects of Henlow Parish Councils communications. Henlow Parish Council website continues to do well. Don't forget to sign up for regular news alerts via the website. As we move with the times, may I issue a gentle reminder to 'like' or 'follow' Henlow Parish Council Facebook page. You will find latest news and information from within the Parish posted regularly as well as notices of events being held.

The Parish Pump is uploaded onto our website for you to read and enjoy. Copies are available to those wishing to receive a hard copy. Please provide Mandy with your name and address and a copy will be delivered to you. In addition, it has been agreed that a small number will be placed in the Village Stores and One Stop at Henlow Camp.

Crime statistics continue to remain low, with the occasional increase in Theft and Burglary offences. In the main, these seem to increase during the lead up to Christmas. Cllr Joy has recently agreed to take on the role of Neighbourhood Watch Co-Ordinator for Henlow. If you would like to know more information regarding the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme running in Henlow, please contact Cllr Joy. It goes without saying, should you see anything suspicious or concerning, please call 101 and report it directly to Bedfordshire Police. We have a very active Speed Watch team in place now, thanks to the hard work and efforts of Kenneth Smith. Ken has spent many years helping Henlow through promoting Speed Watch, for which I am very grateful. Speeding is an area of concern for many residents. The Speed Watch team are always looking for more volunteers so, if you would like to get involved, please provide your details to Mandy who will pass them on.

Finally I would like to thank Mandy Howard for her hard work over the last year. Mandy has been with us a year now and I know I speak on behalf of all the Councillors when I say thank you and how much we appreciate her efforts.

Enjoy your summer, be safe and thank you all for continuing to support Henlow Parish Council.

Cllr Jon Wheeler

Chairman, Henlow Parish Council.