

## **Chairman's Report 25/5/2016**

I'd like to start by saying how grateful I am to Mark Hayes-Newington for accepting the office of Chairman and Victoria Sandars the position of Vice-Chair; I'm sure they'll do a fantastic job and enhance the ethos of our village.

I still find it very strange being called a Parish Councillor; I always thought such a role was reserved for 'Old Fuddy Duddies' with too much time on their hands. I joined with the naïve view that it would be a position where I could contribute locally in the decision-making that directly affects our community and make a positive impact. Little did I realise how little power Parish Council has in reality and the constraints it has to work within.

It came as a surprise then that as Chairman the village directed many of it's frustrations to me and expected action to be taken. Bonfires, hedge cutting, parking, pastoral care, speeding, hay lorries, pot holes, dogs, litter collection issues were all channelled my way.

It is understandable that villagers get frustrated when things do not seem to progress or do not go their way but the Parish Council largely acts as a conduit for public opinion and tries to bring about change by influencing the real decision makers.

The Parish Council tries to be very proactive in it's support of the community, especially behind the scenes and invests a lot of time and effort in tasks that benefit the village. We consider a wide variety of issues and not just planning applications and highways problems. With this in mind the last 12 months have seen numerous improvements to the village:

### **Highways**

Speeding through the village has been a sensitive issue for a number of years now so I am delighted to report that after much campaigning the speed limit in Westbrook is about to be dropped to 20mph.

We are still looking at traffic calming measures along the Lower Lambourn Road.

There have been major alterations to High St, with new tarmac passing zones put in place.

A new sign stating that the village is unsuitable for HGV's has also been introduced.

### **Defibrillator**

A particular highlight of the year was the introduction of the defibrillator into the church porch. Events made it clear that this essential piece of medical equipment was lacking in the village and after fantastic fund raising a defibrillator was purchased and first aid courses were run at the same time.

### **Community Actions**

On a rainy Saturday morning a dozen or so villagers met and gave the village a spring clean in conjunction with 'Clean for the Queen'. Thirty bin bags of rubbish were collected and it has been agreed that this will become a yearly initiative.

Thanks to all those who helped spread bark chippings around the playground.

The Big Dig proves to be a continuing success and hopefully the Boxford Hoard will be unearthed shortly.

Fund raising for the new cricket ground continues and I'm sure the Boxford Boars will be coming home shortly.

### **Other Highlights**

The Heritage Centre was officially opened, it houses many of the village archives including the recently renovated Barrel organ and it is now the new home of the Parish Council.

The Open Gardens fundraiser was a blooming success with funds going to St. Andrews and the defibrillator fund.

The Parish Council continues to cut the verges and other areas of land for WBC and I congratulate the contractors on a job well done.

## **The Future**

The Old GWR station/bus shelter – I can announce that the village has voted in favour of renovating the site with a view to using it as an information centre for ramblers and cyclists.

It saddens me to report that the three Lime trees in front of St. Andrews have contracted Honey Fungus. Surveys have been conducted and reports suggest that all three trees will have to be felled. We will be liaising closely with WBC and the PCC with the target of achieving a satisfactory outcome.

A Beer Festival will be held on 23<sup>rd</sup> July at the Recreation Ground to raise funds for the Boxford Boars and the Boxford Masques, please attend and do your bit for two good causes.

To my fellow Councillors, I thank you for donating your time and expertise freely without reward and sometimes with criticism.

Lastly I want to express my sincerest thanks to our long standing Clerk, Joy Appleton. Joy has held the position for eighteen years and I am saddened to announce her retirement. She has been dedicated, hard working with a real can do attitude. Her knowledge and advice has ensured the smooth running of the council and she will be sorely missed. 99% of Clerks are paid for this role, Joy has offered her significant skills for free, a saving probably in excess of £30,000 for the village; she deserves a massive round of applause and all of our thanks.

Cllr Paul Kilding  
Chairman 2015-2016