

UPPER POPPLETON PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

I have pleasure in presenting the Annual Report for the past twelve months. However this report is tinged with sadness as the Chairman up to September, Mr Peter Hawkins, passed away following a prolonged debilitating illness. Following this sad event, I was elected to the chair, Mrs Vivien Crabb to Vice-Chairman and the council was pleased that Mr Nigel Evans agreed to co-opt ensuring that the council was full strength. The council met on ten occasions during the last twelve months.

This year has been exceptionally busy, because apart from the usual business, the work involved with the development of an embryo Local Plan, and subsequently the more substantive Neighbourhood Plan was enormous. The Local Plan was put on hold for at least another year as City of York Council decided not to pursue matters, but the Neighbourhood Plan is proceeding, although that will remain in abeyance pending the local elections on May 7th. The boundaries of Upper Poppleton have been redefined, aerial photographs commissioned, consultative meetings held within the village, and leaflets distributed to every house outlining the principles of future planning developments in our area. Coupled with that, there has been a plethora of planning proposals involving the brown field British Sugar site, the 'old Manor School', and the green field sites at the former Civil Service Sports Club, and the Wheatlands site on the West side of Boroughbridge Road. Whilst we support a planned development of the British Sugar site, we are strongly opposed to development of the Civil Service site and Wheatlands site on the grounds of amongst other issues, lack of any proposed infrastructure, problems with traffic congestion on the A59 into the city and maintaining space for development of schools for the increased populations. Also there is an overriding case to open Low Poppleton Lane for traffic to prevent further congestion on the ring road. The Parish Council is indebted to Cllrs. Vivien Crabb, Kathie Brydson and Roper Langford for the considerable work and hours they have contributed to this project which is a joint project with Nether Poppleton Parish Council.

In last April, May and June the council were represented by a small delegation to meet with City of York managers and the contractors on a monthly basis during the development of the Park and Ride facility which was opened last July. Several alterations proposed by the council team were agreed and implemented, however the complex traffic light system has not proved popular and several near accidents have been reported. We have reported these incidents to the police, the local MP, and the highways department. Some adjustments have been made, but further work is necessary to minimise the risk of future accidents. Whilst on the topic of roads, the council has long wrestled with the problem of parking within the village, resisting yellow lines. However, the issue has become substantially worse in the last twelve months and following the prevention of being able to cross the railway lines at the station, forcing alighting rail passengers to exit the level crossing and walking along the road where there is no footpath. Vehicles parked adjacent to the crossing has made this very dangerous, particularly in dark winter evenings and again several near misses have been reported. Following consultation with adjacent householders, yellow lines will be placed 25yards either side of the crossing. Also a single yellow line will be placed on the All Saints Parish Hall side of Main Street as people park both sides of the road preventing the free access of the No 10 bus. Frequently the bus driver has to get out and search for drivers requesting them to move their cars.

On a happier note the Council is pleased to report that the Village in Bloom project secured a Silver Gilt award for the third year in a row, and expressed many thanks to Mr Michael Walker and his small team of helpers. Groups have also been set up to develop an adventure playground for older children adjacent to the football pitch at the Community Centre, and Cllr John Camplin is our representative on this ambitious project. There are moves afoot to regenerate Poppleton Cricket Club which collapsed in 1971. Land has been promised, and 'seed corn funding' has been achieved through the Section 106 scheme. Yorkshire County Cricket Club and the City of York Council have been most helpful. However, both these projects will take some time to come to fruition as the land will take time to be prepared.

The Council has been mindful that we should endeavour to improve communications with all sectors of the village. To that extent, in addition to the usual announcements via posters and three newsletters, the Council, through the expertise of Cllr Fiona Reilly, has set up a Twitter account which is recording almost 100 followers. Furthermore, some financial investment has been made to refresh and improve the Council's website which is accessible on www.upperpoppletonpc.org.uk

Turning to financial matters, the Council received and approved applications for grants from All Saints Church for grass cutting, Millennium Green, Poppleton Children's Sports Day, Community Railway Nursery, Community Centre, Under Fives', Youth Club, Village in Bloom and the Bowls Club. This reflects a cross section of the community from the very young to the not so young and therefore benefiting most sectors. Whilst we endeavoured to keep the precept static, it has not been raised for the last two years, a modest increase of 2.5% (approx £1.00 per house in 2015) in line with inflation was appropriate to enable the Council to continue to support local initiatives.

During the past year, one highlight on 6th July was the passage of the national Tour de France along the A59, which was enthusiastically supported by hundreds of villagers along the route, together with flags, bunting and decorated bicycles on the Green and lampposts, followed by a barbeque on the Green. The Council would like to thank all those who organised and assisted in making that a memorable weekend.

Many other improvements have occurred in the last few months, the diseased elm tree on the green has been removed and grass seeded, the damaged benches around the beech tree by the Co-op have been replaced by two lovely alternatives in memory of long term residents Mrs Freda Regan and Elsie and Wally Baldock, which was also supported by an anonymous donation to defray the costs. The raised flower bed near the church reflecting the centenary of the start of WW1 has received many favourable comments, the village pumps have been repainted, and bulb planting has continued to make a glorious display in the spring. The bus shelters have also been refurbished following vandalism. However it is very gratifying to note that crime in Upper Poppleton is 19% less than previous years and is very low. No major crime was reported, some minor crime occurs infrequently so the village is considered a safe area. However, do maintain constant vigilance to maintain this happy state of affairs.

Many residents have commented on the state of the road surface of Long Ridge Lane, and recently the Council has approached the Highways Department pointing out the rough surface which it is a bus route, and asking for this road to be resurfaced. The Council is awaiting a response.

The Council is coming to its final meeting of this four year cycle and the local elections take place on 7th May after which a new Council will take office. As chairman, I want to place on record my gratitude for all the work, time and effort the current councillors have contributed to running of Upper Poppleton. In my experience it has been the most effective and happy group of volunteers in this village that has been my pleasure to work with. Finally, I must pay a tribute to the Council Clerk, James Mackman, for his work in dealing with the endless paperwork, countless e-mails and for guiding the chairman in the intricacies of local government.

J. Stuart Robson

6th April 2015

Chairman

Upper Poppleton Parish Council