

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT OF UPPER POPPLETON PARISH COUNCIL
2016/17

The last twelve months have been very busy with usual activities combined with some exceptional projects which has put extra demands on the time of the Parish Councillors, who have been extremely diligent in their work and attendance. In fact, the attendance level has been about 78%, which bearing in mind holidays and illnesses, I think is excellent. The Council in the last year has welcomed Alan Farnsworth, following the departure of John Camplin, and David Johnson, and is now running at full strength.

Following the installation of yellow lines, parking problems have eased much to the delight of bus drivers, but nevertheless parking remains a difficulty especially around the medical practice and occasionally in Main Street, near the station and on the Green between the Surgery and the Methodist manse. This is a difficult problem, and the Council is watching this with keen interest. Whilst dealing with traffic issues, the rising bollard at the southern end of Millfield Lane no longer functions and the City Council is to consider its future as it will cost a considerable amount of unbudgeted money to renew it.

Following the purchase of the telephone box adjacent to the Co-op being decommissioned (it had only been used three times in two years), the Parish Council has sold it to a private investor who wants it for a garden feature. However, there has been difficulty in getting the electricity supply disconnected, the current supplier quoted a sum of nearly £1K which was clearly unacceptable. Discussions are ongoing with other contractors. Whilst dealing with acquisitions the Council has purchased the store hut on the Main Street allotments for £1, for the purpose of turning it into a Village Store and various organisations are using this facility including the Scouts, Village Show Committee, Cricket Club and Netball club.

Following the disruption caused by Yorkshire Water necessarily laying a new water main, the resurfacing of Long Ridge Lane was done last summer. However, that was not in an entirely satisfactory manner and the white lines had to be replaced three times by the Highways Dept. The Council has also reported the poor state of other roads in the village where potholes have proved particularly dangerous to cyclist. Partial patching has been done fairly recently, most noticeably in Ebor Way. Whilst not looking particularly attractive, at least it is safer.

UPPC has been much exercised by the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, requiring seemingly endless meetings. A dedicated team of Councillors, namely Mrs Kathie Brydson, Mrs Vivien Crabb and Mr Roper Langford have met with their Nether Poppleton counterparts, often on a weekly basis. The Plan is now complete and has been reviewed by the Inspectorate who were impressed and, following public consultation, it is now being considered by CYC. This is to maintain some control of development of the delightful environment in which we enjoy. The progress of this plan has been hindered by the lack of a Local Plan covering the whole of York which keeps being postponed. Nonetheless, we are very grateful for the conscientious and dedicated work of the three councillors involved. As a footnote, our Neighbourhood Plan is so good that other Parish Councils have been seeking our advice.

Turning to finance, it has been a pleasure to award financial grants to all those who submitted applications, namely All Saints Church (grass cutting), Millennium Green's new board of trustees to help future development, Children Sports Day, Poppleton Community Railway Nursery, Poppleton Luncheon Club, Under Fives' Group, Village Show, Poppleton Youth Action Group, Poppleton Centre and the Poppleton History Society. All are worthy recipients to assist the cross-section of ages

in the village to enjoy the facilities on offer. The council is careful with its expenditure and Standing Orders decree that competitive quotations for contracts in excess of £1,000 are sought, where possible, as exemplified by the awarding of the grass cutting contract for 2017. After serious discussion, although the reserves are healthy, it was considered following last year's decision not to increase the precept, prudent to increase the precept by 3% this year to keep pace with inflation and to obviate the need for any large increases in the future.

The detailed financial statements are on your chairs.

The Council has also actively supported the Village in Bloom competition again, and after three years of Silver Gilt Awards, in 2016 it was splendid news that the Poppletons had been awarded a Gold Award. This was a fitting tribute to Mr Mike Walker who fronted this working group. Sadly, Mike is not in the best of health and he has retired from this project after many years of dedicated work and the lack of a successor has meant that Poppleton will not enter the competition in 2017. However, the group, formed as a sub-committee of the Council, set up the first village show in August which was deemed a success despite fairly inclement weather and included a vintage car display, horticultural exhibits and competitions, and brass band.

The Council has been involved in other projects too numerous to note individually in this short report, but consideration of planning applications has been vital component of the Council's consideration. This has been made easier by the technological expertise of Councillor Roper Langford in projecting the plans onto a screen at meetings to facilitate meaningful discussions and informed decisions. Unfortunately, whilst some of the deliberations of the planning group of Councillors Brydson, Crabb and Buckle seem to bear fruit when considered by the ultimate planning arbitrator, the City of York Council, sometimes the UPPC is puzzled by the outcome of other applications when local knowledge seems to be ignored.

I started this report by mentioning the demands on individual councillors and I want to end it by thanking all the Councillors for contributing their talents in individual ways. They have bonded into a strong and effective team. Even when disagreements occur these are usually resolved in an amicable manner. In addition, it would be remiss not to thank the Clerk for his administrative diligence. It is only when one is Chairman, does one realise the amount of work that the Clerk does, often behind the scenes, including the necessary accurate and precise financial management for and maintaining the records which frequently have vital historical implications when dealing with planning regulations and Green management. The council is grateful for his experience.

Finally, as Chairman, I have to report that I attend meetings of the Yorkshire Local Councils Associations and West Ward meetings on your behalf representing the interest of Upper Poppleton.

J. Stuart Robson
Chairman, Upper Poppleton Parish Council
9th May 2017