

# **Barnwell Parish Council Chairman's Report 16<sup>th</sup>. May 2023**

This is my second year as Chair. It remains a sometimes frustrating but often rewarding activity.

Trying to get repairs and maintenance completed to a satisfactory standard can seem almost impossible and is certainly very frustrating. (A four year wait for entry gates, crumbling roads, overgrown footpaths, not to mention planning disputes!)

Maybe that makes it more rewarding when a job is completed. (The silt clearance in the brook for example) Various events, Royal and otherwise have taken up time but have gone well. I feel there is wider participation of people in these events and also in the Parish Council. At my advanced age this is great to see.

## **The environment**

We have continued to work on our small village contributions to increasing biodiversity and the mitigation of climate change. The Community Orchard is planted and growing with, so far, 100% survival rate. In particular the planting day was a great success. All of this was grant funded and included a good deal of work by the environmental group and other volunteers. The wildflower areas of the recreation ground have been extended and the established area is again a sea of colour.

Our grass contractor is cooperating in leaving some areas for wild flowers to do their thing. We feel they provide a good service and are good value for money. The trimming of the basal growth was only partly carried out this year and I would like to simplify and examine again the Schedule so we can try to satisfy as many people as possible with balance between tidiness and biodiversity.

## **Royal and Community events .**

This year a good deal of time has been taken up with events both sad and celebratory of a Royal nature. Our own Duke was welcomed to the Jubilee tree planting and a small reception afterwards. The Crab Apple tree was kept alive in the exceptional drought thanks to our volunteers and a fine plaque has been installed. After the sad passing of Queen Elizabeth, in cooperation with the church, a condolence book was put in place, a message sent to the palace and no less than two proclamations of the new King made. At the Coronation the Parish Council supported the Duck dash with children's activities, a time Capsule preparation and an official photograph.

### **The Neighbourhood Plan**

The plan is now officially in place and will be published on the website. It has undergone considerable amendment by the planning inspector. It was given approval by a majority of those who voted. It is hoped that the amended plan will be a useful document when considering future policy and planning applications.

### **The village appearance/maintenance**

A highly successful litter pick gathered some 30 bags of rubbish and was well supported. There is a constant supply of potholes which we keep reporting with mixed results. There are, however, some areas of the village where the road is either breaking up or subsiding. These need to be on top of our agenda for the next few months. The tree seat on the village green has been replaced with a new model dedicated to Juliet Wise and donated to the village by Graham and the rest of the family. The village is now responsible for two grit bins, one has been replaced and the other is in my garden waiting. (Both are recycled plastic).

### **The playground**

The main village playground is very popular and appreciated by our landlord at the Montagu Arms. The PC inspects the playground regularly and we have a professional inspection carried out every year.

### **The recreation ground**

The exercise equipment has been installed during this year but is not as popular as the playground. I hope we can increase the use of this and the recreation ground in the future. We have ideas to improve the appeal of the field and we hope to replace the fence.

### **Road safety and speed cameras**

We have a working, solar powered, speed camera on Armston road thanks to a grant from the police Commissioners department. There is an issue with the data collection which is being expertly pursued by a member of PC. The battery powered camera on Hemmington road is on loan and requires recharging every 3 weeks. There are plans to replace this camera and the non working one outside Castle View with mains powered cameras once more grant money can be obtained.

Installation of the long awaited village entrance gates is promised within the next 3 months and these should help to slow the traffic on Armston and Hemmington road.

Over many years the council has been rebuffed when attempts have been made to introduce a 20mph limit in the village. Regulations appear to have been relaxed but the finance will remain a problem I'm sure. I hope we can revisit this issue.

### **Support for the community**

We make moderate donations to help maintain the Church clock; we organise and pay for maintenance of the defibrillator as well as supporting Oundle Volunteer Action. This organisation has become even more important since there is no bus service in the village.

While not our primary function I hope the PC can play a small part in encouraging an active, welcoming and supportive community.

You don't have to be on the PC to work on improvements to the village. The Neighbourhood Watch, the Care and Share website and the experimental warm space week in Lathams are great examples but of course there are many more.

### **Planning and routine issues**

The Parish Council has reiterated our opposition to the large expansion of Warehousing at Thrapston.

Closer to home we have had some issues with the planning dept. On one of these sites the county Council decision has been overturned and the outcome is now broadly in line with PC thinking. Above all we are hoping for more consultation and communication with the planning officers. Unfortunately the tide and budget constraints are running against us.

### **Communication**

The information on our website has increased and the newsletters on the Barnwell Care and share have been a great success. I hope we can rekindle a more regular newsletter on the web by giving our editor more material.

The notice board is also being well maintained and updated. The phonebox and care and share website are both active and being looked after by volunteers.

### **The future**

At approx £50 per year for each household I hope you will think the PC is value for money. We are so lucky to have a very able, hard working Clerk and we also have a good mix of skills and experience in our volunteer councillors.

I hope you can see that we are not lacking in ideas and ambitions. I would encourage you to not only contact us with your thoughts, preferably in writing, but to get involved where you can. You don't have to be on the PC to work on improvements to the village.

I know Barnwell has a reputation for being an active and community minded village. Thanks to everyone who has created and maintained this. Long may it continue.

David Brown