

Another busy year which I hope will be apparent from my outline below.

The PLAYGROUND

The Village playground continues to be extensively used, particularly by visitors to the Montagu Arms. This is serving the original idea of benefiting the community asset of the pub as well as Barnwell children. Both playground and exercise equipment in the Recreation Ground are checked regularly by members of the PC and are in good condition. The Recreation Ground now has a brand new horizontal climbing wall which was paid for by grant funding. I would very much like to continue to encourage the use of the recreation ground.

The Environment

The wildflower areas in the Recreation ground are slowly increasing and are now looking impressive , particularly in the older established parts. The mowing regime in the village has a few areas which are left to encourage wild flowers but it is hard to please all the people on this issue. The brook banks are only fully cut in the Autumn with the central channel trimmed usually in July. This provides a good "rewilded" thread through the centre of the village. The Queen's canopy orchard is doing very well and the new seat is awaiting installation. I hope we can get the new seat in for the summer and more long term widen the wildflower areas in the recreation field so there is a longer track for people to walk through.

Thr Trees

The trees and Lime basal growth trimming is also a compromise between trimmers and non trimmers! Some members of the Parish Council with helpers trimmed some 25 lime bases in the winter. Some large parts of the old willow fell down in storms last winter which emphasises to me the importance of long term maintenance. This is concerning as we are reliant upon North Northants to survey and maintain the trees. We need to review which bases need trimming next year to ensure some rotation.

Highways

Some pockets of progress have been evident from the Highways dept at N N Northants. There has been some road patching and most noticeably the installation of the long awaited Village entry Gates. Reporting items on Fix My Street can bring results but items have a habit of disappearing or being labelled as fixed when we know they have not. The potholes lining person seems to be the most active member of the team. The Clerk and councillors have attended 5 meetings about work which needs attention with very little progress on the ground. We are particularly concerned about the severe rutting of the road outside Montagu Terrace and Montagu House. The reinstatement of the footpath into Oundle has been raised again and again with the N Northants council.

Village Assets

The village assets are checked annually and this year has seen the installation of two new grit bins and some maintenance of the village green seat. The speed indicator on Armston road has been adjusted for height and fixed more solidly in the ground. We are hoping to obtain 2 new speed cameras which will be solar powered. We have advisory 20mph signs around the village and the 20 mph signs for refuse bins have been used by several parishioners. The new fence around the Recreation field has been installed during the year and is looking great. The, comparatively new LED street lights are being maintained and we continue to pay off the loan arranged to pay for them. The price we have to pay for electricity supply is rising but the council is trying to find a more competitive price.

Planning

During the year we have been consulted on several planning applications, most have yet to be resolved at N Northants. We take considerable care and time to respond, using planning reasons for our replies on some occasions holding extra meetings to meet the deadlines set by Noort Northants. The local council gives us deadlines for any replies but then applications seem to get “stuck”. There are 3 in the pipeline for a total of 11 houses at the moment .We supported 5 houses at Friar’s Close. The Neighbourhood plan has proved a useful guide. I worry that negotiation after we have seen and responded are not always available to us as a council.

Flooding

There has been more flooding, this year than I can remember, thankfully only on the roads have been affected. This is no doubt due to climate change but the silting of the brook is not helping and efforts to get some clearance of the silt are continuing. The Environment Agency has less money this year and many more pressing needs. We have had two meetings with a rep. from the agency and will continue to keep our name in front of them while researching any other possibility for silt clearance. I do appreciate the need for maintaining biodiversity along the brook but avoiding the danger of flooded houses takes precedent in my opinion.

Bus service

The reintroduction of some form of bus service to the village has been actively pursued and we are very hopeful it is beginning to bear fruit.

Events

Unlike last year we have not had many events to organise except for the litter pick which was very well supported and gleaned some 20 bags of rubbish. The Defib training provided by Oundle First responders was fully booked and well received.

Bits and Pieces

We have continued to support the provision of an improved mobile signal in the village.. We have lobbied our MP with concerns about conversion to a completely digital system. We have also voiced our objections to the large development of warehousing at Thrapston. Grants have been made to support Volunteer action, the clock in the church and to our volunteer First responders. The First Responders check our Defibrillator which has been repaired during the year.

Our precept had to be raised this year but is still only averaging around £66 per household per year. We try very hard to keep this to a minimum and I feel it is good value for money.

I am very grateful for the support of all the Councillors and also volunteers who have made things happen in the village. We have divided up responsibilities so each councillor has several items to keep an eye on. It's a joint effort and while frustrating it can be can be rewarding. Throughout Nicki, our clerk, has continued to give dedicated and patient service.

My sincere thanks to all.

David Brown Chairman of Barnwell Parish Council