

## **Chairman's Annual Report for the 2011/12 Council year.**

I have now completed two and a half years as Chairman of the Parish Council. Since my report last year, we have lost the services of Gary Smith who resigned and has now left the area. We were pleased to be able to co-opt Michael Parker but this still leaves one vacancy, in the South Ward. My thanks go to Michael and the other Councillors - Michael Dear (Vice-Chairman) Lesley Hunt (Chair, Planning Committee), Vinny Patel, John Hinkly and David Rafferty for all their work; preparing for and attending Council meetings and involving themselves in working parties, acting as Council representatives on the committees of outside bodies etc.

My thanks also go to our Clerk, Janet Mason, and our Assistant Clerk, Karen Sterling, who have again dealt with a busy year extremely efficiently. In addition to the normal administrative procedures, there are frequent queries from local residents and business people that need answering and I know that many people are very grateful for the concern and advice they receive. All Council meetings and many sub-committee/working party meetings are held during the evenings and either Janet or Karen is usually present. Janet is the Council's Responsible Financial Officer and prepares and monitors the budget, maintains the accounts, preparing them for submission to the internal and external auditors, and ensures that the Council's actions are lawful and in accordance with our rules of governance and accountability. Karen deals with hall and pitch bookings and normally looks after the Planning Committee ensuring that, in addition to preparing agendas and minutes, the relevant planning application documents are available for Councillors to view at meetings.

During the last 12 months, I have again had the privilege of attending special assemblies at both Primary Schools in order to present 'Marion Orpen' prizes to one of the pupils. I also represented the Parish Council at the Remembrance Parade service in Amersham.

The subjects of localism and neighbourhood planning have been widely discussed during the past few months. I have attended a one day conference organised by the National Association of Local Councils and another, organised by the Association for Market Towns, where these subjects have been debated.

The Parish Council has, during the past 12 months, installed and opened the new play area in Westwood Park. This was partially funded by a grant of £50,000 and has proved to be extremely successful. It is a great pleasure to see families enjoying the facilities and, hopefully, there will soon be more items of equipment for the younger children.

A couple of years ago we converted one of the tennis courts to a Multi-use games area but could afford to fit only one goal and basketball net. A second grant from the County Council, via the Local Area Forum, is expected in this financial year and will allow us to complete this project so that games such as 5-a-side football and basketball can be played.

The maintenance of our open spaces is divided between Amersham Town Council and 'Spruced-Up', both of whom do an admirable job. Our street lighting maintenance contractors, Forde and McHugh, continue to provide good, prompt service.

The Council is still trying to find a site for allotments but, in the mean time, there is the possibility of a garden share project through an organisation called 'Amersham in Transitions'. People with gardens larger than they can manage are being encouraged to team up with people who are looking for garden space.

The Parish Council has only one permanent committee (Planning) which meets every three weeks and discusses all planning applications made within the Parish boundaries. It then makes recommendations to Chiltern District Council which is the planning authority. Additionally, it has recently written to Bucks County Council, objecting to the waste transfer station on London Road even though the site is just outside Little Chalfont.

The Village Hall continues to be well used and the hall management committee tries to ensure it is always presentable, suggesting various improvements from time to time.

The Council is pleased to be able to support various local activities and organisations; the largest financial contribution continues to be to the Community Library but smaller grants have been awarded to the Good Companions, Dial-a-ride, CAB and the Mayor of Chesham's Christmas lunch. The Council continues to support the hanging basket scheme in the Village centre organised by the Community Association and finances the Christmas lights on the trees adjacent to the Village Green and the Village Hall.

We were delighted that the Community Association was able, by setting up a Charitable Trust and raising money through a public appeal, to purchase the land between Snells Lane and the approach road to Dr. Challoner's High School. There is still much work to do but it is hoped that it will not be too long before the Parish Council can take over responsibility for maintenance and the park can be open for the public to enjoy.

We have frequently sought help and advice from our two District Councillors, Don Phillips and Peter Martin, and our County Councillors, Tim Butcher and Martin Tett; our thanks go to all of them for their support.

In addition to the Parish Councillors and staff, I would like to thank all those who help the Council in various ways. This includes those who are members of the various working parties and the village hall committee. Thanks also to the Community Association and the band of helpers who ensure that our newsletters (usually 2 per year) are delivered to all homes and businesses in the village.

Looking forward, the Council has plans this year to undertake a parking survey of the village. Without wishing to raise expectations too much, we would like to know, from residents, the major concerns about parking issues. We also are looking at the possibility of a fitness trail through the woods north of Westwood Park and creating a 'Friends of Westwood Park' organisation. It promises to be another full year and, to help in this, it would be good to have people putting themselves forward for possible co-option on to the Council.

*Brian Drew*

*May 2012*