

Chairman's Annual Report for the 2013/14 Council Year.

Little Chalfont Parish Council has had another busy year. I am pleased to report that, following the co-option of James Wyper, we are at full strength but eight Councillors for a Parish the size of Little Chalfont is a little on the low side. Each of our Councillors therefore has to work quite hard to ensure all the business is completed. Next May, following the boundaries commission review, the full number of Councillors rises to nine, which should offer a degree of help. My thanks go to all my fellow Councillors for their dedication to the role, which is totally unpaid.

In addition to monthly Council meetings, the planning committee (all Councillors are members) meets every three weeks. The Donkey Field proposal has been one of the major developments that we have discussed in the past year. Having objected to the initial application, we also raised concerns about certain aspects of the second one. The local planning authority gave planning consent and we have to accept that we and the LCCA did all we could to influence the scheme and make it as acceptable as possible.

The proposal for a waste transfer station on London Road has reared its head again. No planning application has yet been submitted but a public exhibition provided an opportunity for people to see possible designs. Although the site is just outside our Parish, many people who live here would be affected by the scheme and the Parish Council has already expressed concern with the proposal.

The District Council's 'Draft Delivery Plan Document', following on from the Core Strategy has taken up a considerable amount of time, especially for the Planning Committee's Chairman. We have submitted our comments and suggestions for alterations to the document which will go to public examination later this year.

During the past year, the Council agreed to fund one-hour free parking in Snells Wood car park. This decision was not taken lightly as it costs over £9000 per annum but we wanted to help the local traders and make it easier for our residents to decide to shop locally whenever possible. The scheme has been well received. I occasionally talk to people using the car park and several have told me that they visit the village more since the free parking scheme came in to effect.

As a further encouragement for people to use local services, but also to help the environment, cycle stands have been installed on Chenies Parade and at the Village Hall/Library. These were funded by Bucks CC through the Local Area Forum.

Eighteen months ago, the local community gave an emphatic endorsement to the suggestion for a new community centre. A working party, comprising Parish Councillors and members of the LCCA and the Community Library, was set up to progress the idea. We are grateful to a local architect who attended many of the working party meetings and was able to give invaluable input free of charge. A number of architects were invited to give presentations and three were shortlisted. Members of the working party visited all three and saw examples of their work. A detailed brief was then sent to each architect on which they based their final presentations. Eventually, JBKS architects, based in Aston Rowant, were recommended to the Council and have been advised they are the preferred bidder. If all goes well, we should be in a position to show some design drawings later this year and a public exhibition will be held in the Village Hall so that everyone will be able to make comments before any further decisions are made.

Parking and speeding issues continue to concern many residents and the Parish Council is trying to tackle both within the limited powers it has. Our response to the feasibility study, following our parking survey, is about to be agreed by the Council. This will not mean that all (or possibly any) of the suggestions for changes in the parking restrictions will happen immediately but hopefully we can, when finances permit, work with the County Council to improve the situation that exists at present. The speeding issue is being addressed with the imminent purchase of a movable vehicle activating system (MVAS). This is a sign that flashes when approaching motorists exceed the speed limit and can be moved between about six positions within the village. Part of the funding for this came from the Local Area Forum.

Another road safety measure concerns the crossing point over the A404 between Halifax House and Chenies Parade. Following a deputation from Halifax House residents to the LAF, improvements are being made. New signage and road markings have already been installed and a red road surface is promised soon. The scheme has been funded with contributions from the LAF, the County Council Leader's fund, Paradigm Housing and the Parish Council.

Westwood Park continues to attract many people and the working party meets regularly to suggest more improvements. Last year, free tennis was offered to young people during the school summer holiday period and this proved very popular. A decision will be made soon on whether this will be repeated in the summer this year.

New Christmas lights were purchased for the tree near the village green and many favourable comments have been received.

Looking to the future, the Parish Council has set up a working party to look at the possibility of having a war memorial in the village. It is hoped that if this goes ahead the remembrance parade, which already takes place in the village, could start or finish at the memorial. Another project, although at present in the hands of the Little Chalfont Charitable Trust, is the Nature Park. The intention is for the Parish Council to take over the responsibility for the running and maintenance of the park once it is open to the public. The timing of this depends much on the result of the appeal for donations to enable the completion of the work needed to make the park safe and acceptable.

Finally, and most sincerely, I would like to thank the two employed members of staff. Karen Sterling is our assistant clerk who is responsible for various matters including the hall and pitch bookings. Janet Mason, the clerk and responsible finance officer, keeps us all in order and ensures that the Council abides by the rules of local government. The commitment and the helpful way in which these two carry out their duties are very much appreciated.