

Newton Kyme cum Toulston Parish Council

Chairman's Annual Report 2017 - 2018

17th May 2018

The year began with several challenges; the resignation of the Chairman, the identification that the precept income would be significantly below what had been anticipated, issues relating to the clerks position and the unresolved issue of the transfer of the land previously occupied by the village hall all requiring resolution.

1 Chairman

The Chairman confirmed that he intended to resign with immediate effect and left the meeting and there being no other candidate It was agreed that Cllr. Bob Hall would once again take up the role but for a defined period of 12 months. This would allow another member of the PC to become available to take up the role going forward from May 2018.

2 Precept

During the previous year in reviewing the financial status and viability of the PC it had been assumed that with the doubling of the village our financial income would also double without any increase in the precept per household.

It became apparent that this was not the principle that would apply therefore this presented a substantial challenge as our anticipated expenditure would be considerably in excess of our income and within a 2 – 3 year period the Council would run out of money.

There was therefore an urgent requirement to formulate a budget against an agreed strategy which would have to be communicated to and be acceptable to the community and which would form the platform for our activities in the future.

In previous years given our small size the PC had managed within its income given that expenditure requirements were small reasonably foreseeable, and this also had allowed a reserve to be established. The reserve had been identified as being needed against possible professional / legal expenditure relating to major developments e.g. the Southbanks development, the turbine application, Sustrans, and the village hall land transfer.

In the event it had not been necessary to expend resources on these items as where required professional services had been provided free of charge through the good offices of various members of the community.

It was recognised that the legislative environment within which we were operating was increasingly more complex and the PC were aware of the need to adopt a more formal approach given the ever-increasing legal frameworks being imposed on PC's and this was a challenge.

It was agreed that a strategic approach was required to address these various issues, and that 3-year strategy paper be produced (which has been circulated, and is available on the parish council website). This document considered the expanded size of the village and its future needs and identified all anticipated areas of expenditure. This requirement meant a significant increase in precept and so a wide consultation programme was undertaken prior to adoption and submission as part of our budget requirements.

This process was completed in February and formally adopted, and we now have a firm basis for the next three years.

3. Governance

The recently recruited clerk resigned in the summer of 2017.

The job of Clerk is becoming more professional and fewer and fewer individuals were either qualified to undertake the duties or were prepared to do so.

Following a search and recommendation a new clerk who comes from the locality agreed to accept the position and started in the autumn of 2017.

The clerk brought considerable experience having previously worked with Boston Spa and since her appointment has energetically reviewed and transformed our records and processes a significant workload. We now have a sustainable legally compliant and affordable arrangement in place.

Village Hall

(The former village Hall was demolished several years ago; the Hall and land transferred to a nominated group in trust).

For some 10 years discussions have been underway for the land to be transferred to the Parish Council as it is a village asset. These discussions had stalled, and it was decided that a firm effort would be made this year to conclude the matter. Substantial progress has been made with agreement reached in principal, financial matters being agreed and the matter is now at the final stage of a simple land transfer being enacted.

Other matters

During the year the Council continued to provide essential financial support to the Village Church and supported the Flood Group activities (although at no cost) during the year both of which they regarded as beneficial to the community as a whole.

We have endeavoured to involve the expanded village and have plans to increase communication aspects having commissioned a review of the web site and its link into the community and to Newton Kyme News.

So, to summarise – it has been a busy year. The Parish Council now has a 3-year strategy in place supported by a viable budget, being applied within high standards of governance, a framework which sets us up well for the coming period. The planned orderly transfer to a new Chairman Councillor Adam Jennings will ensure good continuity of these plans and everyone in the community is welcome to our meetings or to participate at any time.

Finally my thanks go to the other members of the Council and our new clerk for all their hard work during this period of significant transition which has seen real progress relating to our affairs

Bob Hall

Chairman

May 2018