

Deeping St James Parish Council

Chairman's Report to the Annual Parish Meeting, 2006

The Parish Council has met twelve times during the year, generally on the last Thursday of each month, with the December meeting postponed to the beginning of January to avoid the Christmas holiday. Each meeting has been preceded by an opportunity for the public to bring matters to the council's attention, known as the Public Forum, although these opportunities for public participation in the Council's agenda have been somewhat less used this year.

Between Council meetings our various committees have met to make delegated decisions and to give advice to the full Council. These are the Finance Committee, which also deals with and employment matters and general purposes; the Planning Committee which meets every month to look in detail at planning application prior to recommending observations for the Council to send to the Planning Authority; the Playing Fields Committee; the Allotments Committee; the Cemetery Committee and the Transport Committee. Councillors are also involved in a number of external bodies as appointees or representatives of the Council, notably the Deepings Councils Liaison Group, the Deepings Management Partnership and local schools' Governing Bodies.

During the year we have coped with the resignation of our Clerk, Sue Valentine, and the process of appointing our new Clerk, Sheila Kostyrka, fortunately with no gap but, naturally, Sheila has had to get to know the parish and the files and systems used here. She moved into a slightly larger office at The Institute and we have provided a broadband Internet connection to improve communication.

Work continues in making improvements to the two major projects opened last year: improved access, landscaping and sound reduction work at Woody Heights Skate Park, and the provision of mains water at the Allotments, the latter through the hard work of a few allotment-holders. The Council has provided interpretative signs at The Locks, similar in style to the one at The Cross, as a modest contribution to tourism in Deeping St James. Some improvement work in partnership with Market Deeping Town Council is planned at the Memorial in Riverside Park.

The Council has continued to monitor the local footpaths and in partnership with the County Council to plant trees in various locations in the parish. The cemetery has been maintained and the area currently used for burials extended, and the employment of our maintenance worker has enabled the Council also to add its own litter-clearing efforts to those of the District Council and to undertake other maintenance tasks around the parish without always having to engage contractors.

Grants have been made to a number of local bodies as part of our service to the community, and our voice has been added to local campaigns for the building-up of the community, notably the improvement of the condition of the Deepings Leisure Centre. The Parish Council part-funds a Police Community Support Officer, which continues to have an impact on some aspects of anti-social behaviour. Since the resignation of our first PCSO a series of unfortunate circumstances has made it hard to keep the cover which was intended, but Lincolnshire Police have been to a lot of effort at our request and provided a rota of PCSOs to keep us going until our own dedicated officer begins work. It is important to emphasise that this cover is in addition to the regular Police service and not a substitute for it.

Plans for one more bus shelter and further information displays at stops without shelters have been moved forward and work should commence soon on these, mainly on Shaws route 100 to Market Deeping and Spalding.

The Council has a representative on the community steering group which is seeking to refurbish

Deeping St James Church Hall as a more useful building for community purposes and is supporting the project with public funds raised through the parish precept. Not only will the cash itself be useful to the steering group in the early stages before other funding is available, but will demonstrate to regional and national funding bodies the local commitment to this project, which should be of great benefit to the community.

The Council is also looking at ways of improving the environment around the junction of Horsegate and Bridge Street, particularly the former petrol station site, but it is too early to say how this might turn out – comments and suggestions would be welcome, of course, as always.

The Council has continued to make its work known and to solicit comments and suggestions through the medium of a quarterly newsletter and via its “Deepings Gateway” website, and through generally good relations with the local press. The website also provides much other local information and links to other local sites, hopefully making a resource which all local people can use as their first port of call when seeking information – dsjpc.org.uk, or just type “Deeping” into a search engine and it will be near the top! The allotment-holders in particular have made extensive use of a discussion forum facility to share information about common concerns – much of the organisation of the water supply work was done this way.

Again, the Council has been distracted this year by the departure of some councillors, but we have been pleased to welcome the co-opted ones who have taken their places. Much has been achieved for the parish although, as I predicted this time last year, it has been largely a year of consolidation after the rather frenetic activity of the previous couple of years.

This brings me to the end of my second, surprise, term of office as Chairman and with increasing responsibilities in the Church I shall definitely not be seeking “an historic third term” but will gladly retire in the hope that I shall have left the Council in reasonable shape for a successor who will move the business forward more successfully than I have sometimes been able to do. In particular, before I stand down at the next election I should be pleased to see the landscaping and sound-deadening work at Woody Heights complete and the last bus stop installation done.

I'd like to finish by thanking Cllr Jim Blessett for his support as Vice-chair and both the Parish Clerks with whom I have served over the last couple of years, and all members who have served this parish so well in 2005/6.

11th May 2006
Mark Warrick,
Chairman