

DUFFIELD PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2 MARCH 2022

2021 saw a generally more settled year for the Parish Council, following a difficult period for everyone due to Covid; despite the continuing challenge of the virus and government restrictions, 2021 saw a return to a more settled way of working and our staff have been able to balance home working with returning to the office as circumstances demand. The Council resumed face-to-face meetings in May 2021 and was able to run several events, including a very successful fireworks display and Remembrance Parade in November and an 'outdoor theatre' performance in the summer.

Over the summer Parish Councillor Chris Short resigned from office; I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his many years of service on the Parish Council and his dedication to the village and its residents. Chris remains a Councillor with Amber Valley Borough Council. In November we followed the co-option process for a replacement Councillor. We received applications from three candidates and on a majority vote, appointed Shamsa Hussein as the new Councillor. A very warm welcome goes to Cllr Hussein who brings a wealth of local knowledge and enthusiasm for service to the Council.

The Council is made up of 12 Councillors and the following also served during the year: Kevin Burke, Jim Grieveson (Vice Chair), Paul Greenwood, Yvonne Greenwood, Roger Harrison (Chair), Joe Martin, John Shoesmith, Mark Spilsbury, Nick Storer, Jan Thompson and Alice Vincent. The make-up of the Council is now 6 Lib Dems, 3 Cons, 1 Lab, 1 Green & 1 Non-affiliated. Our Councillors cover most of the age ranges, with improved gender balance and diversity.

The Council is organised into key Committees and Working Groups. Key Committees include the Outdoor Management & Development (Chaired by Nick Storer & Vice Chair Yvonne Greenwood) to oversee existing assets and development of new facilities and Strategic Development (Chaired by John Shoesmith & Vice Chair Mark Spilsbury) to focus on longer-term needs, residents' priorities and climate change. The Finance & Management Committee (Chaired by Roger Harrison & Vice Chair Jim Grieveson) focuses on compliance with our financial regulations, the annual budget, management accounts and the precept and a Staffing Sub-Committee (Chair Cllr Harrison & Vice Chair Y Greenwood) focuses on resources, salary levels and recruitment. We also operate small Working Groups to focus on the Environment (Cllrs Shoesmith/Martin & Vincent) and Anti-Social Behaviour (Cllrs Storer & Vincent)). We support Plastic Free Duffield (Cllr Vincent) and provide Councillors as a Governor of Ecclesbourne School (Cllr Vincent), Millennium Meadows Committee (Cllrs Spilsbury/Storer) and The RJ Weston Duffield Charity (Cllrs Harrison & Shoesmith).

Our team of employees has remained the same with the addition of our new Admin Assistant Dee Fitzgerald, who has proved invaluable in providing office support to the Clerk Jane Terry and Assistant Clerk Jackie Clements; our Village Warden Michael Forkin has provided the usual high standard in maintaining the grounds at the Cemetery and around the village, ably assisted by Michael Hutchinson; and David Melsome, our Finance Officer, has looked after the accounts for the Council. We also took delivery of the first Parish Council vehicle - a Ford Ranger with Council livery which has become a very important member of the team! Our thanks are due to Cllr Kevin Burke for helping define the vehicle specification.



In December the Parish Council received an award for excellence from the Derbyshire Association of Local Councils (DALC), a reflection of the hard work and dedication of the whole Parish Council team.

S137 Grants

Three grants were made in 2021; in July £702 to the Duffield Community Association (DCA) to install the electrical connection for the defibrillator in the former Hazelwood Road phone box; in September, to Duffield Pre-School £500 for a replacement outdoor canopy; and in November £1700 to the Wild Trout Trust for temporary and permanent interpretation boards for the Snake Lane Weir fish pass project.

Next year in early June we will be providing grants to Community Groups of up to £50 who wish to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee with street parties

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Village Action Plan

In May the new Village Action Plan was published, setting the priorities for improvements in the village over the next 5 years. The Plan preparation was led by Cllr Shoesmith, with input from various Councillors, was agreed by Council and published following extensive consultation with residents during 2020 and early 2021. The revised plan can be found on the Parish Council website:

<https://www.duffieldparishcouncil.gov.uk/duffield-action-plan.html> The priorities identified in the plan are arranged under four themes and the Council has created working groups to advance these. The four themes are: Traffic Management; Environment; Community and Culture and Supporting Vulnerable Residents. An update to progress in the four theme areas is outlined below.

Traffic Management

Parking: In 2020 we carried out a survey of residents' concerns regarding parking along Chapel Street, Ecclesbourne Avenue, Wiltra Grove and Town Street and following the feedback received, Cllr Mark Spilsbury has been liaising with Derbyshire County Councillor Gez Kinsella and officers to consider ways of improving parking along these roads.

As a result of this, the County Council has agreed to a number of changes including double yellow lines at the end of Ecclesbourne Ave and Chapel St; additional signage to direct drivers to the Eyes Meadow Car Park; the marking up of parking spaces on Chapel Street and the creation of an extra space on Town Street; the creation of 3 disabled spaces, and the creation of limited waiting spaces on Chapel Street. We are hopeful that these changes will go some way towards improving parking capacity in the village centre. Cllr John Shoesmith is assessing ways to improve parking in the rest of the village and the opportunities for the creation of identified cycling routes and key footpath improvements.

Community Speedwatch: The Duffield Community Speedwatch Group (chaired by Cllr Thompson) is now active following training undertaken in July, and will be undertaking speed checks around the village in 2022, having started with speed checks on Broadway.

20's Plenty: The Parish Council has agreed to back this initiative and will help to co-ordinate a group of volunteers to petition the County Council to consider adopting 20 mph speed limits on some roads.

Environment



Wildflower areas: Wildflower areas were created by Di Hancock and local volunteers at the Cemetery in 2020 and these have continued to be improved in 2021 leading to a greater diversity of planting.

Floral Hanging Baskets: Floral displays were again installed along Town Street in the summer; the budget for these has been increased in 2022 to allow for extra ground-level planters to be installed and winter displays to be considered.

Ecclesbourne Meadow: The Parish Council was able to offer its support to two projects in the vicinity of Ecclesbourne Meadow including the Amber Valley Borough Council 'Forest for the Future' tree planting scheme; at the time of writing, the planting of trees was being organised by Groundwork Nottingham and due to commence in March 2022. We are also supporting the Wild Trout Trust in the creation of salmon and trout ladders along the nearby River Ecclesbourne, which would enable spawning further up-river; an s137 grant has been awarded to provide interpretation boards nearby. Cllr Jim Grieveson is appointed to represent the Parish Council on the Ecclesbourne Meadow projects.

Further enhancements including installation of a Memorial, Sensory Garden is proposed at Ecclesbourne Meadow in future years. This will need to be negotiated, with approval from Amber Valley Borough Council.

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Cycling: The Council continues to support the Derwent Valley Cycleway project and has recently installed new cycle racks at Eyes Meadow car park and changing rooms.

Community and Culture

Events: 2021 saw a resumption of some outdoor events; the Parish Council was pleased to be able to organise its first Outdoor Theatre event, the Illyria Theatre production of '*The Further Adventures of Dr Doolittle*' on 25th July 2021, and is happy to announce Illyria will return in 2022 with '*Peter Pan*' on Sunday 10th July. We were also able to bring back the Fireworks display and Remembrance Parade in November, both of which proved very successful, with a record attendance at the Fireworks evening. The Fireworks display and Parade will return in 2022 and the Parish Council will also be holding an Outdoor Cinema event at Eyes Meadow, on 20th August.

The Parish Council was also happy to support the Party in the Park held in July by the DCA as an interim substitute for the Carnival, the Eyes Have It music festival held in July, and the Scarecrow Trail held in the village by the Duffield Arts Festival organisers. We look forward to supporting further events in 2022.

Photography Competition/Duffield Calendar: The Parish Council held its first photography competition, judged by well-known local photographer Ashley Franklin. The winning entries were showcased on the website and in Duffield Scene and the overall winner was included in the 2022 Duffield Calendar (the winning photo by Sharon Jackson is pictured, right). Next year, the Parish Council will be taking over the Duffield Calendar for 2023, previously produced by Ashley Franklin; the Calendar will feature photographs taken by the local community and any profits made from the sale of the Calendar will be donated to a local charity. Look at the website for details of how to submit a photo.

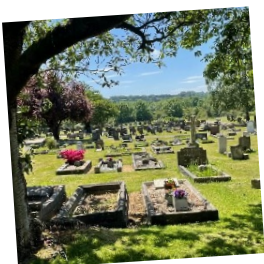


Supporting Vulnerable Residents

The Parish Council continues to support the Good Neighbours Group, which was able to resume its "Good Neighbours Week" in October and Cllr Jan Thompson now represents the Council on their Steering Committee. As part of the Council's commitment to vulnerable residents the Parish Council has also budgeted to provide further support funding in next year's budget for the RJ Weston Duffield Charity (Weston Centre) whose activities at the Weston Centre continue to support older people, including this year's introduction of a film club, an art group and ipad training. Cllr Harrison (Chair) & Cllr Shoemith are Parish Council appointed Trustees.

Open Spaces

Eyes Meadow: There have been a number of improvements made at Eyes Meadow. The car park has been white-lined to increase capacity and improvements made to the drainage to alleviate the flooding issues; we hope that these improvements will encourage residents to use the car park to access the village centre. A drinks van, Coffee Buzz and Fizz is now resident in the car park at weekends and is proving popular with Meadow users. Following a grant from the Football Foundation, the Council was able to replace all of the goal posts at the Meadow in 2021. There have been improvements made to the barrier on Donald Hawley Way to improve its visibility and speed humps have been added; safety barriers have also been added to protect the lampposts on the Meadow. Cycle racks have been installed and the footpath surface from the car park past the Cricket Ground has been improved.



Cemetery and Allotments: The Cemetery continues to serve local residents. There were 24 full burials and six ashes burials in the Cemetery, and 17 in the Garden of Remembrance during the year, a slight increase on 2020. Allotments have been improved with new markers installed and additional plots created; 2021 also saw the publication of newsletter for allotment holders. A dog waste bin has recently been installed outside the Cemetery gates.

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Gray Recreation Ground: Gray's Rec has seen new outdoor gym equipment installed for use by older teenagers and adults. A picnic table has been installed for use once the weather warms up, a memorial marker to recognise the history of the Rec has been added, and the goal posts replaced following a grant from the Football Foundation. In 2022 further improvements will be made including the installation of a "Big Rig" multi-gym incorporating the basketball net, alongside the play area.

Budget for 2022/2023 (1 April 2022 to end March 2023)

The annual budget for 2022/23 was set in January 2022 at £270,069 total expenditure, of which £41,500 is for projects to be undertaken during 2022/23. The Parish Council has set the Annual Precept at £206,000 for next year and although annual cost inflation is projected to be at least 7%, we have kept the increase down to 3% in what is likely to be a more difficult year for many families as the cost of living accelerates. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) recommends holding General Reserves of 30-60% of the Precept value and we have set a target of holding £80-90,000 General Reserves plus an additional £42,299, which have been earmarked for Specific Projects in future years for equipment replacements, footpath maintenance, building maintenance and car park tarmacking. Approx.83% of our income arises from the Precept, and the rest comes from cemetery burials, allotment rents, events and income from renting out the Eyes Meadows playing fields. Staff costs equate to about 38% of expenditure.

We have some exciting projects planned for the coming year, including an outdoor multi-rig gym at Gray Recreation Ground, various environmental projects, picnic benches and a BBQ area at Eyes Meadow as well as our support for the Ecclesbourne Meadow and Snake Lane Weir Fish Pass projects as they gradually take shape.

THANKS.....

- To everyone in Duffield who continues to support the objectives of the Council in enhancing facilities and services for the community, particularly the village volunteers: the many individuals who carry out litter picking, keep an eye out for elderly neighbours, run village clubs and organisations, help coach sports activities, or volunteer for the Carnival Committee; and to members of the DCA, the flood warden Luke Heaton, our footpath and tree advisers, Community Speedwatch volunteers, Ecclesbourne Meadow working group, uniformed organisations and others, our sincere thanks;
- To my fellow Councillors for their tireless work on behalf of the community;
- To the Council staff:
 - Jane Terry, Parish Clerk, for giving her commitment and dedication to the ever varied and demanding role of Parish Clerk;
 - David Melsome, Responsible Finance Officer for managing the Parish Council accounts and making sure that the Parish Council is financially compliant;
 - Jackie Clements, our Assistant Clerk, who manages the Cemetery and looks after the Council's website and media communications;
 - Dee Fitzgerald, Admin Assistant, who joined the Parish Council in August 2021 and has been invaluable in providing office support and progressing projects;
 - Michael Forkin, Village Warden, who continues to work extremely hard ensuring that our village, grounds and Cemetery look their best; and
 - Antonio Hutchinson who as Village Grounds Worker is ably assisting the Village Warden with his work.



**Cllr Roger Harrison,
Chairman, Duffield Parish Council**

March 2022