

DUFFIELD PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - APRIL 2021

The Parish Council has seen some changes and challenges in the last 12 months. The Coronavirus pandemic meant that all our Council meetings continued but had to be held via video link and several of our planned activities had to be cancelled. We did however manage to adapt to keep as many services and facilities open and running as possible.

Additionally, our Clerk Kath Gruber retired in August and she was replaced by Jane Terry following a successful handover. Our thanks are due to Jane for settling into her new role so ably. At the same time, we decided to create a new role of Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) to strengthen the control of our finances and enable the Clerk to spend more of her time on other important issues in the village and we were fortunate to be able to appoint Sabrina Doherty as RFO from August to end November on a shared basis with Belper Town Council. We appointed David Melsome on a permanent basis on 1st December. Our thanks are due to Kath and Sabrina for their commitment and hard work and we wish them well for the future.

Last year, it was with deep regret that we reported the death of our Chairman Colin Thompson on 5th April 2020 and we decided to honour his memory with a memorial stone at the cemetery.

Following Colin's death and after taking advice from the Amber Valley Borough Council Returning Officer, we followed a Co-option process for a replacement Councillor. We received applications from three candidates and on a majority vote, appointed Jan Thompson as a Councillor. The Council is now made up of 6 Lib Dems, 1 Lab, 1 Green and 4 Conservatives.

RJ Weston Duffield Charity ("Weston Centre")

The Parish Council has continued to provide funding for staffing and operational costs for the RJ Weston Charity whilst it changes its trustee status, and this may continue in 2021/22 at a reduced level until the Weston Centre becomes self-financing.



We helped fund the Good Neighbour project in 2020, allocating £1000 for the group which works to improve the lives of older people in Duffield and promotes good neighbourliness in the community. Good Neighbours organised the Project Cheer initiative to provide nearly 140 hampers delivered by the DuCS volunteers to elders, mostly living on their own but also to some couples at Christmas. A lovely array of goods was donated by individuals and local businesses, members of the three WIs, children from Duffield Scouts and Brownies, pupils at William Gilbert School & Lower School at Ecclesbourne, the Trefoil Guild, and members of St Alkmunds Church. Funding was also provided by DCA.

Grants

The Parish Council awarded £200 to the Brownies, wildflower seeding at the Cemetery and resolved to grant £200 to DCA for wildflower seeds along highway verges once DCC approval has been received.



New Duffield Action Plan 2021 – Consultation event and survey

The new 2020 Village Action Plan, is being prepared and will be presented at the 5th May DPC Annual General Meeting. This sets the priorities for improvements in the village over the next 5 years. The Parish Council launched a market consultation in 2020 consulting with residents to find out their views. A draft Plan has been prepared using the feedback received and was followed up by a further online survey in February / March 2021. We also carried out a survey of residents' concerns regarding parking along Chapel Street, Ecclesbourne Avenue, Wiltra Grove and Town Street and Derbyshire County Council has been requested to look into parking restrictions along these roads as well as looking more widely at parking across Duffield.

The revised plan will be issued after the Full Council meeting in May 2021. To read more, visit <https://www.duffieldparishcouncil.gov.uk/duffield-action-plan.html>

This survey will be further extended in the springtime to assess the views of residents regarding Supporting Vulnerable People, one of our key themes for the new Village Action Plan.

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Events

The Coronavirus pandemic severely curtailed our plan for summer events and unfortunately, we were unable to stage the open-air theatre and cinema events or hold our traditional fireworks display in November. We did manage to hold the annual Act of Remembrance on 11th November 2020 and have run a photography competition, judged by well-known local photographer Ashley Franklin. The winning entries will be publicised on the website and in Duffield Scene and the overall winner will be included in next year's Duffield Calendar. We are hopeful that, with the gradual easing of lockdown measures, we will be able to hold the Illyria Outdoor Theatre performance of The Adventures of Dr Doolittle on 25th July 2021 and Outdoor Cinema on 10th September 2021.



Cemetery

We have continued to maintain this precious asset, despite the pandemic. There were 22 burials in the Cemetery and 9 in the Garden of Remembrance during the year, which is about the same as last year.

Floral Hanging Baskets

Floral displays were installed along Town Street in the summer.



Plastic Free Duffield – Climate Change

The Parish Council declared a “Climate Emergency” in 2019/20 and has pledged to decrease our own CO² emissions and encourage others to do the same. The council pledges to take climate impact into consideration in relation to all its decisions and actions. The Parish Council is fully supporting the community group “Plastic Free Duffield”, who are working towards obtaining a Plastic Free village status for the village by raising awareness on reducing the amount of single use, throwaway plastics that cause environmental damage and create litter in the village.

Duffield Community Speedwatch Group

We have reinvigorated the Duffield Community Speedwatch Group: a speed gun and PPE for the teams have been purchased, training carried out and a schedule of our first surveys is being put together for when lockdown easing allows.

Ecclesbourne Meadow

We have started to plan for a tree planting scheme and an aspirational masterplan for the remainder of the Meadow. Consultation will take place through an online survey to be issued around Easter 2021. The land is currently owned by Amber Valley Borough Council but due to budget restrictions, they have been unable to progress any work for next year, so the Parish Council has stepped in to expedite the process of what could become a significant open space asset for the village.

We are also supporting the Wild Trout Trust in its efforts to obtain grant funding for the creation of salmon and trout ladders along the nearby River Ecclesbourne, which would enable spawning further up-river.

Gray's Recreation Ground

The playground has remained open since July 2020 with advice on covid secure use and the children's roundabout was replaced in February 2021.



Anti-Social Behaviour

In common with many neighbourhoods, the village continues to experience intermittent issues with anti-social behaviour, and the Council continues to work with the Police and others to present a united front in tackling these issues. Community Walks were set up by the Council and Neighbourhood Watch have now taken these over. In addition, the Council has installed further CCTV cameras and continues to employ a private security firm to make patrols and give feedback on problem areas where necessary.

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Budget for 2021/2022

The annual budget for next year was set in November 2020 at £254,743 expenditure of which £42,000 is for projects to be undertaken during 2021/22. General reserves were set £80-90,000 within NALC recommended limits (42-50% of the overall precept) and £20k specific reserves have been earmarked for specific projects in future years, equipment replacements, footpath maintenance, building maintenance and car park tarmacking for future years. Our income is raised through the Annual Precept (approx. 85% income), cemetery burials and income from renting out the Eyes Meadows playing fields and, exceptionally this year, we received a £10,000 grant from AVBC due to the pandemic. Staff costs equate to 37% of expenditure.

We decided to replace our internal auditor for 2021/2022 in accordance with good practice. Our thanks are due to Brian Wood who has audited our accounts for the last 7 years. We welcome Jo Taylor to her new role.

We have some exciting projects planned for the coming year, including an outdoor gym at Gray Recreation Ground, replacement goalposts at Eyes Meadow, various environmental projects, tree planting on Ecclesbourne Meadow and a new grounds maintenance vehicle for the groundsmen/village warden to better serve the community.

Coronavirus

The Council has found different ways of working to ensure it continues to support the village. Please keep safe and well and we look forward to welcoming you back to Council Meetings in person soon. In the meantime however, please continue to join our remotely held meetings if you can.

THANKS.....

- To everyone in Duffield who continues to support the objectives of the Council, and 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; to members of the DCA, the flood warden Luke Heaton, our footpath advisers, Community Speedwatch volunteers, Ecclesbourne Meadow working group, uniformed organisations and others, our sincere thanks.
- My fellow Councillors for their tireless work on behalf of the community.
- To the Council staff:
 - Jane Terry, Parish Clerk, for settling into her new role so efficiently and her service to the village, giving her commitment and dedication to the ever varied and demanding role of Parish Clerk;
 - David Melsome, Responsible Finance Officer for taking over the accountancy reins in December;
 - Jackie Clements, our Assistant Clerk, who manages the Cemetery, keeps the communication channels open and informative and coordinates the lists of planning applications;
 - Michael Forkin, Village Warden, who continues to work very hard ensuring that our village, grounds and Cemetery look their best;
 - Antonio Hutchinson who joined the Council in February 2020 as Village Grounds Worker and is ably assisting the Village Warden with his work; and
 - Claire Gillman, our Apprentice shared with Belper Town Council and who completed her apprenticeship with us during March.

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

