

DUFFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – MARCH 2024

It has been a busy and challenging year for the Parish Council since the last Chair's report, with positive progress from the newly appointed Council. The Parish Council is made up of 12 Councillors and serving since May '23 have been Gregory Broadbent, Kevin Burke, Jim Grieveson (Chair), Roger Harrison (Vice Chair), Steven Knee, Louise Nelson, Pippa Rowen, John Shoesmith, Mark Spilsbury, Jan Thompson and David Walton with Simon Black elected following a co-option in June. The Council comprises 6 Liberal Democrats, 3 Conservatives, 2 Green and 1 Labour Councillors, although we try to run the Council on a non-political basis. Key Committees include the Outdoor Management & Development Committee to oversee existing assets and development of new facilities; the Strategic Development Committee to focus on longer-term needs, residents' priorities and climate change; the Finance & Management Committee focusing on compliance with our financial regulations, the annual budget, management of accounts and the precept; and a Staffing Committee focusing on resources, salary levels and recruitment. We also operate small Working Groups to focus on the Environment, Traffic and Parking and Anti-Social Behaviour. We support Plastic Free Duffield and keep in regular contact with Ecclesbourne School and the RJ Weston Duffield Charity as well as having representation on the Millennium Meadow Committee. Of course, none of this would be implementable without a staff and we the Council (and as Duffield residents) are hugely indebted to Parish Clerk Fay Craig who has done a sterling job since taking up her post in November of 2022. Fay is supported by her Assistant Clerk Jackie Clements, Admin Assistant Dee Fitzgerald and Responsible Finance Officer David Melsome; a wonderful team who continue to offer their expertise and diligent attitudes to their roles. Village Warden Michael Forkin and Groundsman Michael Hutchinson have continued to provide an exceptional standard of work maintaining the Cemetery grounds, Gray Recreation Ground, Eyes Meadow and the village in general. The Council would like to thank the team for their efforts over the year.

Village Action Plan

The Council have continued to work towards the priorities for improvements for the Village as set out in the Village Action Plan, a copy of which can be found on the Parish Council website: <https://www.duffieldparishcouncil.gov.uk/duffield-action-plan.html> The priorities identified are arranged under four themes: Traffic Management; Environment; Community and Culture and Supporting Vulnerable Residents, and an update on the Council's progress is outlined below:

Traffic Management

A persistent issue. Cllr Black, Cllr Knee and Cllr Shoesmith are constantly looking at applicable parking solutions for the benefit of Duffield residents as well as looking at resolving issues of problem parking and issues connected to public transport. Cllr Shoesmith also continues to assess opportunities for the creation of identified cycling routes and key footpath improvements.

Improvements to the car park and drainage at Eyes Meadow have been made, with further work planned in the immediate future, and we encourage those who are able to use this car park when appropriate.

The Duffield Community Speedwatch Group (chaired by Cllr Thompson) has continued to undertake speed checks around the village. Since November we also have taken charge of two speed detection devices in the village to act as a gentle prompt. We successfully applied for and received a grant of over £5000 towards the costs. The location of these will change periodically.



Environment

The Parish Council, as part of an environmental initiative, took the opportunity of the Kings Coronation in May to give schoolchildren seed packets for wildflower planting. Commitment to rewilding continues and a budget has been allocated to further wildflower planting around the village.

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The village looked fantastic yet again through the year thanks to the beautiful seasonal baskets and planters put in place in June and November. The Winter Planters were a new addition last year following a small increase to the budget and we hope to continue this to ensure the village can benefit from the floral displays year round. Plans will be made to increase the locations of the displays for the future.



In September Di Hancock agreed to become our voluntary tree warden. We benefit a great deal from her knowledge and enthusiasm. Also in September a tree nursery was started, managed by one of our allotment holders. Trees have been kindly donated by

Woodland Trust...more coming November this year. In the years to come, once matured, they will be replanted around the village at suitable locations.

Environmentally, the headline news for many residents last year would be the October floods. As a Parish Council we are aware that this can be extremely distressing for residents and had to learn quickly how best to help those affected and direct their enquiries to the appropriate people or department. We are now better equipped for the future and in December Andrew Clements agreed to become our voluntary Flood Warden. Our thanks go out to him. He has already compiled a large report collated from submitted evidence. Cllr Shoemith also compiled a report about what happened and is happening going forward. This (and much more information) can be found via the Parish Council website.

Community and Culture

In May we were able to offer small grants to local groups to hold street parties or celebrations for the King's Coronation.

Our Outdoor Theatre event, the Illyria Theatre production of '*Robin Hood*' on Sunday 25th June was enjoyed by enthusiastic families. Unfortunately, the numbers attending were lower than we would have hoped and we have decided against staging a performance this year. It may return in future years.

The Remembrance Day parade returned to the original A6 route which proved to be a popular decision. NVC Security helped to safely close the roads for the event. The Parish Council was also happy to support the Duffield Carnival and the Eyes Have It music festival and we look forward to offering this support once again and to supporting further events in 2024.

Unfortunately, in July we had an upturn of reported Anti-Social Behaviour in the village. The ASB working group, chaired by Cllr Rowan promoted guidelines on how to report ASB and engaged NVC Security for summer holidays security patrols. We have also been looking for ways to tackle the problem by working closely with local Police and PCSOs.



Supporting Vulnerable Residents

The Parish Council continues to support the RJ Weston Duffield Charity (Weston Centre) whose activities aim to support older people. The Weston Centre offers activities including a film club, a lunch club, coffee mornings and fitness activities. We also promote the Helping Hands initiative, which brings much needed support to the lonely and vulnerable with assistance in everyday tasks. Cllr Thompson is currently the Parish Council appointed Trustee of the charity.

Grants

We were delighted to be able to provide community grants this year for Duffield Methodist Church for sanding and sealing the Church Hall floor, William Gilbert School for scooter pods and bike racks, Duffield Squash and Racquetball Club for bike racks and Duffield Tennis Club for girls coaching.

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Open Spaces

There have been a number of improvements made throughout the village. In June three new picnic benches were installed at Gray Recreation Ground and in July new metal bins were installed at Gray Rec and Eyes Meadow to replace the vandalised and burnt out bins. In the summer, the Cemetery footpaths were repaired and improved and the Duffield Meadows Snake Lane Footpath had improvements and maintenance work undertaken.

The Cemetery continues to serve local residents. In 2023 there were 26 full burials and three ashes burial in the Cemetery, and 14 in the Garden of Remembrance. We have had two allotments handed back and not renewed and these have been offered to the next people on the list. Currently there remain six people awaiting an allotment.

New Parish Council noticeboards have been installed at Gray Rec and outside the White Hart.



Budget for 2023/2024 (1 April 2024 to end March 2025)

The annual budget for 2024/25 was set in January 2024 at £330,344 total expenditure, of which £42,300 is for projects to be undertaken during 2024/25. The Parish Council has set the Annual Precept at £227,115 for next year keeping the increase to 5%, which is below projected annual cost inflation in what is likely to again be a 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 £68,134 - £136,269 General Reserves plus an additional £19,798, which has been earmarked for Specific Projects in future years for equipment replacements, footpath maintenance, building maintenance and car park repairs. Approximately 85% 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 32% of expenditure.

The Coming Year...

We have some exciting projects planned for the coming year, including starting work on the new Village Plan, improvement works at Eyes Meadow, the new Weston Yates Parkland project as well a continuation of our work with the appropriate organisations regarding speeding and parking and organisations to tackle anti-social behaviour. We are also looking to generate more Community and youth engagement. We are looking in the next few months for CCTV to be installed at Eyes Meadow and a new Neighbourhood Watch Scheme to be launched.

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 Andrew Clements, our tree warden Di Hancock, our footpath advisers, Community Speedwatch volunteers, Ecclesbourne Meadow working group, uniformed organisations and to all the staff at the Parish Council, our sincere thanks. Personal thanks also to my fellow Councillors for their tireless work on behalf of the community.



Cllr Jim Grieveson
Chairman, Duffield Parish Council