

Chair's Report to the Parish Meeting 28th November 2022 at 7.30 p.m

Since the last meeting we have lost two long-standing members of the community. Zena Hester who died in May and Rachel Kellett who died in August. Rachel had been part of the WI had supported village events throughout her time here. The Parish Meeting would like to add its condolences to the family and friends of both ladies.

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Back in June the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations took place in the village. Thank you to Anthony & Annette for hosting the main event in the grounds of the Manor. Thank you to the Jubilee Committee who worked really hard to make the afternoon and evening event into an unforgettable celebration which was inclusive and saw many villagers meeting each other for the first time. I can assure you that in the background, a lot of effort was put in to complete risk assessments and other paperwork to make sure the event was run as safely as it could be. Thank you to Catriona for the exhibition and for the Afternoon Tea which catered for those who could remember the Coronation. Thank you to people who donated their precious time, their food and their resources – in particular to Pete and Deep Loyal. A rowan tree and the Elizabeth rose have been planted in the churchyard to commemorate the occasion. A new bench has been purchased and will be put into the churchyard in the Spring. A community time capsule is also to be buried under the bench. With the Coronation of King Charles looming, maybe a new Committee would like to organise the next celebration!

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In May, I attended two short courses on wildflower and grasses identification. These are run by the Parish Nature Network. There's still an opportunity available for anyone wanting to be a tree warden. Please get in touch if you would like more details.

A video that was shared at one of the Nature Network meetings explains the climate and biodiversity crisis - link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQZQ-benW9Y> 3 minute video delivered by the Environment Agency.

It is now mandatory, rather than voluntary, for developers to add value via nature. This is known as Biodiversity Net Gain. Developers will need to add 10% at least and leave the development in a better state than they found it. A video to explain Biodiversity Net Gain presented by Natural England – where development or land can be enhanced by creating additional habitats for wildlife whether it be wildflower planting, creation of ponds, bat / bird boxes etc can be found here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sVR9VZYkMLc>

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Notice about avian influenza and how this impacts villagers who keep poultry ...

Keepers of poultry and other captive birds are encouraged to register on the poultry register and it is a legal requirement for flocks over 50 birds. A benefit of the register is receiving up to date information, including local disease outbreaks such as Avian Influenza (bird flu).

Avian Influenza

The UK has seen an increase in outbreaks over the last 12 months, and the start of this season has seen many cases already. If we have an outbreak in Leicestershire, Trading Standards Animal Health Officers may need to carry out foot patrols in your Parish to establish 'backyard flocks' and are likely to ask you if any allotments in the parish have poultry. You may wish to prepare for this now and do please let us know if anyone would like to participate and assist TS officers with foot patrols in their parish.

From Monday 17th October it is now a legal requirement for all bird keepers to follow strict biosecurity measures to help protect flocks. For the latest situation please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu#latest-situation>

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I have to complete the Harborough District Community Safety Partnership Parish Consultation which wants to gauge residents' concerns **for their own neighbourhood**. The headings are Theft, Violent Crime, Anti-social Behaviour, Drug and Alcohol issues, Road Safety, Vulnerable People. Rather than go through each of these questions now, I will leave the question sheets on a table. If you have any concerns, please simply tick the statements that affect you. If nothing is ticked, I will assume you do not have concerns.

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Point 5 on the agenda - Update on the Confer of Power

As you will know from my updates, we have been waiting for a decision about the Confer of Power, which would allow a Parish Meeting, to use money raised from the precept to purchase, maintain and support projects within the Parish.

A very brief recap on why we applied for this –

2007 – two Vehicle Activation Signs (VAS) were installed by Highways at each end of Newton Harcourt

2019 – these had broken and a request was sent to Highways for replacements, the response was that due to limited funding and data relating to speed and accidents, the signs would not be replaced by Highways but there was an option for us to fund our own. With agreement from the Parish Meeting, the precept was raised in order for us to fund the purchase ourselves. After this had been agreed, it was found that the Parish Meeting did not have the legal power to fund this.

Alongside this, historically, the Parish Meeting agreed to give £2000 annually to the Reading Room for improvements and maintenance. This had not been requested since May 2018. Consequently, the balance in the bank account had built up and now stands at just over £10,000 with approximate current annual running costs of £650 (Treasurer's Report to follow).

With this in mind, the Parish Meeting looked for a way to legally spend the money. This could only be done with the Confer of Power. As you will have seen from the Council's response sent to you, this has been declined.

In April, following the audit of The Parish Meeting accounts, the auditor indicated a "healthy balance that needs to be taken into account when next setting the precept," This would mean that we do not request a precept payment from HDC (latterly £1000 a year which is divided by the number of households in the Parish and added to your Council Tax bill) for 2023 and until the bank balance has reached the point of needing to fund its running costs.

In relation to the point made in the response about the query as to why the parish meeting purchases insurance, I have been in touch with LRALC (Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils). Their reply states that they wouldn't necessarily agree that a Parish Meeting can't be sued as we bring people together twice a year for a meeting, and that a conversation with our insurers should make sure that it is covering exactly what we need. I will do this before the next renewal.

With all this in mind, I am proposing that we do not apply to HDC for a precept until such time that the Parish Meeting's bank balance requires money to fund its operational costs. We will vote on this following the Treasurer's Report Point 6 on the agenda.

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I have recently shared on our Facebook page details about the following:

- Wellbeing and Befriending Service aimed at 18+ with mild to moderate wellbeing challenges. There is also an opportunity to volunteer for this via VASL (vasl.org.uk)
- Steady Steps aimed at 65+ - free sessions at Fleckney - a 24-week programme tailored to those who have previously fallen or worry about falling and is designed to help improve balance and stability. This can be found on the Active-Together website

If you know of anyone that could benefit who doesn't have access to the internet, please get in touch.

I have also shared a link on our social media pages to free Bystander Training. This is run by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust. It is online and lasts for one hour. 68% of people questioned did not know what they would do if they witnessed someone being harassed in the street. 79% of victims who have been harassed in public said it DID help when someone intervened. 25 % of victims said someone came to their assistance. This can happen to anyone – any gender, any ethnicity, any age. The training empowers you to do something, without being provocative or challenging to the perpetrator. The link is here

https://www.suzylamplugh.org/Pages/Events/Category/events?fbclid=IwAR3XV5G9NpgsRje6GBBt37tBVi3v_DquIMh_P7xRwgGfdY5MH7EjINXICnI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6eTUO09A5Y> briefly explains what it is.

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Railway works – these are ongoing and will last for another 14 months according to the schedule – though not in the same spot for that length of time. Has there been much disruption overnight? New letter from Network Rail dated 17th November details works from Friday 2nd December to Friday 30th December.

Power cut Saturday 3rd December – section of the village only during the day.