

Annual Report 2023-24 from the Chair of the Parish Council

The year from the last AGM in May 2023 has been a relatively quiet one for Hatley Parish Council.

We have had no Planning Applications to consider, and our main preoccupation has been with the Local Highways Improvement project and reducing the speed limit from its present forty miles per hour down to thirty. Our last attempt at this project saw us just fail to make the grade on the Highways list by one place. This time, after some arguing about costs, we have got as far as getting the new design agreed. Or so we thought. Carrying over into the next Parish Council year, the abrupt change from the national speed limit of sixty down to thirty on the road approaching the East Hatley turn from the east is now being challenged. Dealing with that will be the next Parish Council's work. I would like to thank Councillor Nickerson for his tireless work in this and commiserate with his frustration at the behaviour of Highways.

We saw the resignation of Councillor Pinney in June of last year and I hope that you will all agree that the village and Council will miss him and his wife as they were both active in various community matters. His place was taken by Samantah Abassi, whom we welcome aboard. Councillor Cooper resigned in January of this year. Her place will be filled by co-option as soon as possible. We thank her for her contributions, particularly with the Neighbourhood Watch scheme and the HVA. It goes without saying that we really do need people to come forward, particularly those who are still well below retirement age, to join the Council, even for a limited time, to help run our small but active community. If anybody has any thoughts, will they please talk to the Parish Clerk after the meeting today. We also set up the gov.uk email addresses for Councillors to help keep their Council information separate from their private email accounts.

Our wooden climbing frame, on the playing field, once again squeaked through its annual risk assessment test by ROSPRA recently, but the report highlights the urgency with which we need to raise funds for a replacement. A non-wooden structure would also help defend against the mindless vandalism which we suffered this year when a wooden panel was kicked out by some visiting youth. This was promptly repaired by our community to make it safe to play in – and highlights the helpful nature of so many of our residents, with their different skills.

As the attraction of the village and its recreation ground grows to the ever-increasing population of the surrounding area, we reminded the wider community that dogs are not allowed in the play area, and that dog poop bags should be put in the designated green dog waste bin next to the layby and not in the bin by the play equipment.

Following the Village Hall improvements to the entrance and bathrooms, the mystery of the wet floors was solved, and the landlord has repaired the local problems in the roof which caused it. In the longer run, it was noted that the roof will require some considerable refurbishment. Larger mats, a notice board have been added, and the installation of Wi-Fi will we hope make it more attractive to hirers.

Thank you to ex-Councillor Cooper for pursuing the commemorative plaque project. They have been placed on the outside of the Hall; one for Her Late Majesty the Queen, and one for her Son, King Charles.

We also have had the usual two litter picks this year. The recent 'beating the Parish bounds' as organised by Margot Eagle and Nicola Jenkins turned out to be well supported, with good weather encouraging around 8 of the 35 odd starters to complete the walk. The various talks along the way indicated some of the wildlife features that we enjoy here.

Cambridgeshire County Council came and had a preliminary look at the possibility of using the Hall for pre-school use. They seemed to like the place, but we have yet to hear any more about their decision. Should it happen, it would generate significant income for the Hall, but would change its use profile in a way which would need careful deliberation.

Martin Ward and his team keep the Hall defibrillator in good order. Thanks again to them all. They recently checked the system for a discovered technical issue as advised by the manufacturers; it was found to be unaffected.

Peter Mann continues to keep our very informative and clear website up to date, for which we are all grateful: thank you Peter.

Our finances are in adequate order. We started our accounting year on the 1st April, 2023 with £12,767 in the bank, and ended it on 31st March, 2024 with £15,948. We agreed to increase the Precept, by which we are funded, by 10%.

Others will report on the various commemorations we have made over this year, but I believe that given the modest size of our community, we continue to be a proactive Council, for which I thank my fellow Councillors and their continuing dedication and effort.

Michael Astor
Chair.

19 May 2024