

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – Thursday 12th May 2022

ANNUAL REPORT FROM BARBY & ONLEY PARISH COUNCIL - April 2021– 31 March 2022

On 6th May 2021 a new Parish Council was elected to serve a four year term. So far we have held 14 meetings in the 12 months since the election.

In Barby & Onley there were ten people who submitted nomination papers for the eleven seats, so all were elected unopposed. The remaining seat was filled by co-option of Councillor Gareth James. During the year Edan Edison and Andy Sabine had to step down from the role of Councillor and we welcome Councillors Faith Gorman and Rachael Kilby who were co-opted into their vacant seats.

Daventry District Council ceased to exist in April 2021 and West Northamptonshire Unitary Authority is now in place with three Unitary Councillors representing our ward, Councillor Rosie Humphreys, Councillor Alan Chantler and Councillor Malcolm Longley.

In May 2021 the temporary legislation allowing Parish Councils to meet remotely by Video conferencing lapsed. This means that Parish Council Meetings are now required to be held as face to face meetings once again but thankfully we are now in far safer times following Covid. In time it is our goal to achieve hybrid meetings where at the very least members of the Parish will be able to watch and listen to meetings from their own homes.

Earlier this week I was appointed once more as Chairman at the Parish Council AGM, with Steve Gee as Vice-Chair. Councillor Nigel Gove is continuing his role as Internal Financial Controller for the Council.

We are very fortunate to have a large number of volunteers in addition to the Councillors and my thanks on behalf of all the community goes out to them. These include Ian Webb as website and newsletter editor, Dom Fisher who is Highways Liaison and Neighbourhood Watch Co-Ordinator and our Footpath Warden Alan Atkinson. A notable thanks also goes to all the volunteers who help litter pick a few times a year to rid the lanes outside Barby of all the rubbish dumped or thrown from vehicles, we get upwards of 40 bags a year of rubbish which would otherwise be left to blight the landscape. Thank you to all the others who give their time to also help out who I haven't named directly.

Retirement of the Clerk

This month sees the last month of our long serving Clerk Catherine Camp, who is retiring after 30 years in the post. During her time as a Clerk she has progressed from typing up minutes on a manual typewriter, completed a Certificate in Local Council Administration, become a Fellow of the Society of Local Council Clerks, and acted as mentor for new Clerks throughout the County. She also acts as Internal Auditor from some Leicestershire Councils.

Her local knowledge and experience is second to none and she has been a fantastic servant to the villages and will be missed. Astonishingly Catherine has only missed one meeting due to illness in all that time – true dedication!

On behalf of all the councillors past and present, and both the parish communities for whom she has done so much over the years. We wish Catherine all the best for the future and for a retirement full of fun with her husband Richard!

Finances

I am personally a very strong advocate of the Parish Council precept as it is the only part of your Council Tax that you can be assured is being directly spent on you and not sucked into a distant area of the County. It is a tiny percentage of your overall Council Tax bill and you can be assured it will be spent for your benefit and in your Parish. In November the Parish Council set a budget and requested a precept of £60,483 for the year which commenced on the 1st April 2022.

Parish Council accounts are scrutinised annually by an independent verifier who checks the figures and also checks that the council is operating correctly and has the necessary policies, insurance and risk assessments in place. To ensure that we comply with governance and accountability legislation the accounts are also reviewed annually by external auditors

Full analysis of the income and expenditure and spend versus budget can be found on the website www.barbyandonleyparishcouncil.co.uk

Since the start of 2022 we are all now facing a new challenge very soon after many years of Covid related challenges. We have entered into a period of rapid inflation caused by a number of factors including of course the awful war in Ukraine. The parish council is trying to find ways to manage the costs wisely and some of these include:

- Progressing the movement of parish funds to a higher yielding investment fund.
- As part of this we are currently completing a sustainability report for the CCLA property fund which if progresses will help us earn interest on the Onley Park Ringfenced Funds to help slow down their depletion
- We have already signed a 36 month electricity contract with SSE for street lighting when our current contract ceases with E.ON on 30 June 2022. This will result in an increase in the price of electricity as we are all experiencing, but thanks to quick action earlier in the year it is far less than it is now being quoted and will save us for years to come.
- Mowing contracts have been renewed for the next 2 years at fixed prices.
- We have agreed on a contract to replace the street lighting at Onley Park to LED, this will complete our transition to fully LED street lights within our control. It is an investment that we believe will pay for itself by way of electricity cost reductions within 10 years – sooner if energy prices continue to rise. It is of course also an important environmental consideration as we all must be mindful of. The change the LED lighting which was done in 2017/18 in Barby has been an important factor in us being able to maintain healthy finances in the current climate. Without them it is likely we would be having to drastically cut down on other beneficial expenditure.

Planning

The Parish Council acts as a consultee in the planning process for any applications within our Parish, we have no direct influence, but we act in the interests of those most directly affected and carefully consider our comments based on this. Ultimately decisions on whether planning consent will be granted or not is made by the Daventry Area Planning Authority and we welcome working closer with them over the coming years with the support of our Unitary Councillors. This year the parish has been consulted on 32 planning applications including the much-publicised plan to extend the shooting hours and facilities at Barby Sporting Club. A decision is still awaited on that application later in the year.

Some of our achievements though the year

We have very few members of the public who attend our Parish Council meetings and despite the Parish Newsletter being distributed to all households and each meeting having minutes available online, it is easy to miss some of the achievements we have made through the year and how we have tried to help and benefit the communities, so I have summarised some of these here:

Some of our achievements and notable events include:

- Purchased and installed “Unknown Tommy Silhouettes” in both Barby and Onley
- Play Areas in both villages have been repaired and maintained
- Purchased 20 x Litter picking kits and arrange regular village litter picks in and around the village boundaries
- We have numerous meetings with the Highway Liaison Officer to try and get the roads improved, thankfully just a short while ago a stretch of Barby Lane was properly resurfaced and we understand the rest of this is awaiting budget allocation to complete the stretch.
- Entered into dialogue with the Ministry of Justice to get flooding issues at Onley repaired and to try and put pressure on the MOJ to upgrade the ancient pipework.
- Installed an electricity point for a Christmas tree at Onley Park and purchased decorations for the tree.
- Replace the salt bin at Barby School as it had a hole in the base and was killing a tree.
- Arranged for the Gardening club to plant a tree on The Ware, Barby in memory of the Tree Warden, Bernhard Scott who was tragically killed in a road traffic accident.
- Purchased a Northamptonshire County Flag which is flown when others are not.
- Purchased a new Notice Board for Barby which has been erected on Barby Green opposite the Village Shop.
- In July the fence at Barby Cricket Club was knocked down in a car accident and repaired, this was eventually re-imbursed through the drivers insurance.
- September as normal saw the trimming of the hedges around the play area and allotments once the birds had finished nesting.
- Crown was lifted on the entrance tree at Church Walk so that the Oil tanker and other delivery vehicles can pass without damaging the tree or themselves.
- Paving slabs around the War Memorial were repointed. Thanks to Billy Dickinson who did the work free of charge.
- A cradle swing seat at Barby is being replaced following a snapped piece of metal.
- The wonderful wildflower beds which are quite new to Barby and a wonderful sight when in bloom were enhanced and extended
- Arranged for replacement of the village sign as you enter Barby from Kilsby which was destroyed in a road traffic accident.
- The diseased Acer on Barby Green was felled and 5 cherry trees gifted from Japan as a token of peace were given to the parish and planted in a patch of wildflowers.
- Japanese cherry trees have also planted at Onley Park
- In November Warwickshire Council finally installed lighting at the Willoughby Cross roads after years of lobbying that the junction was highly dangerous. Lets hope it is now safer.
- Defibrillator pads were replaced to ensure that they remain in date and will work if required.
- The sewerage flooding issue on Ware Road/Rugby Road appears to have finally been cleared after years of battling. This was due to numerous pressures and persistence by members of the village and the Clerk.

- We have discussed an offer of purchasing Amenity land at Onley Park, although the initial offer was not accepted this is still being pursued with a possible lease agreement available.
- We carried out an Asset mapping exercise for West Northants Council and received a grant of £294 for doing so.
- Barby Village has suffered regularly blackouts for years and even a brownout last summer. This is now nearly all resolved with a big infrastructure project by Western Power bringing in a new high power cable from Crick. There is a new substation near The Green and despite claims to the contrary the Parish Council unfortunately had no say over where it was located. We offered land owned by the Parish Council but Western Power rejected that as an suitable site. Where it has been positioned is not ideal, but hopefully like the telecoms boxes it will begin to blend into the street scene in time. Unfortunately utility companies are not bound by the need for planning consent, and can put infrastructure wherever they need to, within reason.

Looking to the future

- In conjunction with the Barby Village Hall Trustees we are currently working towards the goal of installing Electric Vehicle Charging points at the Village Hall as a service which all users of the hall or residents from village can use.
- Earlier this year volunteers from the Village who were organised by Councillor Nigel Gove took part in Speedwatch once again. This resulted 93 letters being issues to vehicle owners exceeding 35mph through the village. In the final quarter of 2022 we are hoping to finally progress traffic calming measures to reducing speeding on Daventry Road. This is a project which we have been working towards for some time and we are currently delayed due to the Highways Contract currently being up for renewal.
- Reconfiguring the Vehicle Activated Sign southbound on Daventry Road so that it is more effective and displays your speed instead of just a flashing warning.
- The broadband connection which benefits WiFi users in the village hall is being replaced by a new high speed Gigaclear connection.
- The continued closure of the Arnold Arms after so long is detrimental to the community and it is a wasted asset. Despite rumours of new tenants no announcement has yet been made. We have written to the Red Oak who are the owners to see if they will sell it to the community however as yet we have had no response.
- The first weekend of June includes 2 Bank Holidays making it a 4 day weekend in celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. There are many things happening in both villages so please keen an eye on the village newsletter. The Parish Council obtained a grant of £3,960 to help fund and benefit various activities over the celebration.
- We working on an exciting new project with Barby Townlands Charity who have a vision to extend the accessible woodland for the village. This is on 19 acres of land adjacent to the cricket ground which is currently going through a feasibility assessment into what would be a large tree planting project we'd like as many members of the community as possible to be involved with.
- We are currently reviewing our Neighbourhood Development Plan to give us every opportunity to protect the village for the future in line with what the villagers want from it.

Paul Reynolds
 Chairman
 Barby & Onley Parish Council
 12th May 2022