

Walton Parish Council - Chairman's Report: May 2021

My last chairman's report was in May 2019 when we celebrated the success of delivering the playground, the Neighbourhood Plan and continued to strengthen the relationship between the village hall, the church and the cricket club. I also wished everybody a happy and healthy year ahead - who could have predicted a global pandemic and all the disruption that would bring?

Looking back over that time as a Parish Council we have remained active and busy communicating via Zoom with each councillor contributing to the challenges we faced to fully support the village. May I thank all Councillors for all their support and commitment in that regard and confirm that we have continued to move projects forward and implement crucial aspects of our Neighbourhood Plan.

Two aspects really stand out. The first was the Xmas light switch on. From a simple idea, within 2 weeks it was planned, funded and executed. To see so many villagers embrace the idea and join in really did reinforce the fact that Walton is not only a stunning village but also a fantastic community. I am sure the event will grow and become a significant date in the village diary. The second was seeing just how well used the cycle path was by villagers and local people alike. The access to such a path linking up to Wetherby and local areas as well as a safe place for people to exercise during lockdown reinforces the superb delivery of that project a few years ago.

I am also delighted to see that the new village hall committee establishing itself and is proceeding with real ambition to modernise and extend the village hall. I see this as a project that the whole village can get behind and benefit from well into the future.

Due to the implementation of the automated booking system, the support of the parish council and increased publicity via excellent newsletters, I am sure the village hall will become an even more important part of the community, a vital and valuable village asset into the future.

Further good news in that crime in the village remains minimal, the PC accounts remain robust, but we do face continued challenges. I see a number of threats to the village, which the PC are aware of and working to limit. These include an increased level of traffic through the village often speeding, the impact of major developments in the local area and more locally challenges in terms of inappropriate development within the village, conflicting with the excellent and highly regarded Neighbourhood Plan.

I believe the protocols we have in place to react to these ongoing challenges, along with the positive relationship we continue to foster with Leeds City Council and the Ward Councillors, can be seen as a real success and again I thank all parish councillors for their efforts in that regard.

Can I also thank Helena, the Parish Clerk. Her efficiency and diligence in ensuring all matters associated with the Parish Council and its regulation are adhered to is just so important and allows the rest of us to concentrate in our endeavours to make Walton an even better place to live.

As to the year ahead ... let's hope we see the return of normality, the village work days continuing, the pub thriving and the village developing in all the right ways.

As always the Parish Council are open to ideas and requests from the residents on any initiatives that can improve the physical and emotional wellbeing of the community. I would be grateful for any ideas and comments to be directed via the clerk.

Here's to a happy and healthy 2021!!

David Aspland, Chairman, Walton Parish Council.