

Walton Parish Council Chairman's Report 2023

I feel we have had another positive year as Parish Council. Compared to many, our community is thriving, crime is negligible and our finances despite the limited size of the precept are in good order. The additional injection of c £10,000 of CIL contribution into the coffers, reinforces this position and will hopefully allow us to deliver some additional positive projects over the coming years.

One of the ongoing success stories we should all celebrate is the Village Hall. As part of an ongoing process which started in 2021, the Hall is now a charitable incorporated organisation, a defined legal entity, able to stand alone, raise money and apply for grant funding for improvement projects. As a result a refurbishment is planned to include for the replacement of the wooden floor and the installation of a new infra-red heating system that will bring the Hall up to modern standards. The positive effect is now that regular bookings are in place from Scape School the Walton Group of Artists, WISE and a dance and Pilates class, all activities that as a village we can get involved with. The Hall also hosted the superb Queens Platinum Jubilee lunch, created the Jubilee Garden and was the base for the now 'legendary' Walton Bonfire Night which was attended by Over 500 people. It is the base for the Christmas light display which again was fantastic, seeing, almost without exception, every house in the village, lit up and engaged in the project which I feel really brings the village together as a community.

So thanks to Brian, Mark and the committee for making the Hall such a central and important hub for the village.

As a Parish Council, we have also made significant progress, although it has been and continues to be a significant battle, to address traffic and drainage two of the main concerns for the village considering the continued developments in the surrounding area. My thanks go to in particular, Brodie and Councillor Harrington, along with the Hall Park Residents who have all engaged tirelessly with Yorkshire water and Leeds City Council to formulate solutions to the numerous ongoing and totally unacceptable conditions that we are faced with. The year ahead will I trust see solutions put in place and we will ensure that everything is done to achieve results rather than simply promises of more investigations and analysis.

Action in relation to the Village Plan has continued during the year. I believe the development along Springs Lane is progressing well through the planning system and it was fantastic to see over 40 people turn up to the presentation in relation to the proposed scheme at Walnut Farm, the former Coal Yard on the main Street. As a Parish council we are sanctioned to represent the views of the village so such a level of input and feedback was encouraging and has enabled us to respond accordingly and I trust work with the Planning authority and the developer to ensure we have a scheme in line with the agreed plan which will have a positive effect on the village moving forward.

Whilst Walton remains only a small village, due to the input and efforts of the individual councillors we really have achieved great things and for their continued commitment I do thank the team and especially Helena who as clerk has done an exceptional job in ensuring that all administration and compliance is in good order. It is therefore with great regret that for a myriad of very justifiable reasons, I have recently had to accept the resignations of Helena, David Taylor and Brodie Clark, who have all decided to step down from the Parish Council. I would just like to formally thank all of you for your support and dedication over the past years and wish you all the best for the future.

I don't like to dwell on the negative, but clearly with less councillors we have less capacity to work and deliver for the village, so if anyone has any desire or motivation to help out or join the Parish Council, please do let me know. The positive is that we have been able to recruit a new Clerk, Deborah Marshall, who comes highly recommended, and I am sure her experience, expertise and enthusiasm will serve us very well.

Finally, thanks again to the Parish Council team but also all others who continue to engage in Village life and look to influence matters that affect the village. From my point of view being involved in the last village work day that saw over 35 residents planting over 600 whips on the cycle path, was perhaps my highlight of the year. It made me very proud to be part of this fabulous village we all call home.

David Aspland
Chair
Walton Parish Council