

Walton Parish Council Chairman's Report 2024

2023 has been a year of change with some positives and also a number of challenges that I hope will be resolved over the coming year.

Taking the positives, we have a relatively crime free village, the Parish Council stands in a robust financial position and despite the departure of key councillors in Brodie Clark and David Taylor and Helena as Clerk, we have replaced them with a new councillor Edward Kilby and a new clerk in Deborah Marshall, who are both doing an excellent job. So my thanks to Brodie, David and Helena for their great work over the years and thanks in advance to Deborah, Ed and the existing Councillors for the year ahead.

The Village Hall continues to go from strength to strength. Mark, Brian and the Village Hall Committee have raised, organised and are close to delivering a c £200,000 refurbishment of the Village Hall to provide a modern, energy-efficient community facility with disabled access toilets, a new kitchen floor and a heating system. Having had a sneak preview it looks fantastic and will be a real asset to the village – to all involved a job well done.

I was also delighted to be involved and witness over 30 parishioners turning up with wheelbarrows and spades to plant over 800 whips in phase 2 of our cycle track planting project. To see this kind of enthusiasm and community spirit is fantastic and my additional thanks go to Richard Prudhoe for the excellent refreshments!

Despite considerable frustrations, Brodie and the Hall Park Road team have pushed and continue to work with Yorkshire Water to establish both short and a long-term measure to find a solution to flooding in the village and I thank them for their continued efforts.

In relation to traffic – a proposal for 'Traffic Gates' at all entrances to the village will be disclosed to the village shortly and the Parish Council has funds to put this in place. To get to this stage has been an arduous affair and it's clear that LCC are significantly under resourced and underfunded. However, despite these challenges we will install the barriers this year. These will hopefully have the desired effect of limiting speeding traffic through the village.

Moving onto the less positive aspects of the year, planning remains a real challenge. Despite all our best efforts the scheme for local housing on Springs Lane is still a way from coming on line. In a decision in direct opposition to the local plan and huge objection from locals, planning was granted for the glamping site on Hall Park Road, albeit the conditions imposed with the consent create little prospect of the scheme coming to fruition anytime soon. Walnut Farm saw the developer, rather than working with us, proceed with illegal demolition, tree felling and site clearance that now significantly blights the village. Thanks to Cllrs Lamb and Harrington for their advice and action to limit the significant damage to the village and the conservation area. We can only hope the developer now submits a planning application in line with the village plan that we can support.

To finish on a positive, can I also thank the Cricket Club, not only for the use of the premises for the Annual Parish Meeting, but also for hosting a number of Friday night village social evenings. In view of the pub remaining closed, to have a place for the community to meet up, socialise and catch up has been a blessing and I know is really appreciated.

Looking back through my past annual reviews, a key focus was always to ensure that our 3 main village assets of the Church, the Village Hall and the Cricket club all interact and work together to deliver positive benefits for the village and the community beyond. This is very much in evidence this evening and will be in evidence into the future with the newly refurbished Village Hall.

So finally, thanks again to the Parish Councillors, the Clerk, the Village Hall and the Cricket Club Committee for all their dedicated hard work and all those in the village who contribute to make Walton such a great village to live in.