

Rudby Parish Council: Chairman's Report to Annual Assembly – April 2022

Over the last year Covid has continued to have a huge impact on how we live and work. While progress back towards normality has been made; the path has not been smooth or free from disruption, some families have lost loved ones, and the path of the pandemic remains uncertain.

At the start of the year the council was still operating through on-line meetings, but it resumed holding in-person meetings from the summer. Unfortunately, we were not able to hold a village event in 2021, and in December an in-person meeting was cancelled due to public health concerns.

However, there is no doubt that 2021/22 was a much better year than the darker days of the year before. The council organised a very successful fireworks display for bonfire night, and the switching on ceremony for the Christmas tree on the Village Green was able to go ahead. The routine work of council continued unabated with over 60 planning applications and 240 pieces of correspondence considered, and all the usual care and maintenance activities went on quietly in the background. In the coming year it is hoped we can return to a full programme of activities including celebration events linked to the Queen's Jubilee in early June.

This was another year where we have seen changes within the parish council. Our former chairman, Cllr Foden, left the council in November. Her seat was filled by our newest member, Cllr Webster, and I was elected as chairman. It is pleasing that in the last few years whenever seats have become vacant several people have asked to be considered for co-option. I would like to thank all the candidates for their interest, whether successful or unsuccessful. I would also like to thank our former chairman, Cllr Foden, for her dedicated service to the council and for her exemplary leadership in a challenging time for the council.

With elections for both the new unitary authority and the Parish Council coming up in May, there may be some other new faces around the table soon. To any councillor planning on retiring from the council at the elections, or who stands but is unsuccessful, thank you for your service and support.

I would particularly like to thank our clerk, Emma Wiles, who has proved to be a very dedicated and capable successor to our long serving former clerk, Ann Pyle. As the only officer of this council, a new clerk has a very steep learning curve to acquire the amount and breadth of knowledge needed to perform effectively, but Emma has risen to the challenge.

Cllr Thompson as Treasurer and the clerk as Responsible Financial Officer have kept our finances in good order throughout the year. In line with recommendations from our auditor the council has successfully moved to online banking during the year. Although the council has some financial reserves, these are mostly allocated to projects which are moving forward, and it was not considered sustainable to absorb inflation by freezing the precept for the tenth year in a row and there will be an increase in the precept for 2022/23.

Council projects led by Cllr Jopling with support from Cllrs Tate and Saxton, have delivered improvements to the riverside and Wynd footpaths, and a project to landscape and create an amenity area near the old Linen Mill is in progress.

During the summer, the council consulted with the community on environmental issues. The consultation was organised by Cllrs Simpson and Saxton, who subsequently (based on the results of the consultation) went on to draft the climate action plan which was adopted by the council.

The council is once again acting on concerns raised by residents about speeding. The council will shortly be installing vehicle activated signs on the main approaches to the village, and is supporting the 20s plenty county-wide campaign. Cllr Tate is leading the volunteer group who manage the regular repositioning of the signs.

The council carried out the Regulation 14 consultation on our Neighbourhood Plan. Most of the feedback received was supportive. In the autumn it seemed that we were broadly on the right track. It had been hoped that with Hambleton's new local Plan being adopted in early 2022 we would have been in the finishing straight by now. Unfortunately, a large-scale planning application submitted by Broadacres and some landowners complicates matters. If there are significant delays in the determination of this planning application, the Parish Council will need to give careful thought on best to move forward with the Neighbourhood Plan.

Probably the biggest disappointment of the year has been the failure to achieve a satisfactory outcome to the Chappies field footpath problems. Many residents have raised concerns, but despite the full and active support of our NYCC councillor, the Parish Council has been unable to achieve a timely resolution by working through the proper channels.

This council is fortunate to have been well supported by our hardworking and dedicated district and county councillors, Cllrs Fortune and Hugill. My thanks to them both for all their help in providing effective engagement with the larger authorities. It is a concern that the new unitary authority will only have one councillor representing a larger ward which includes this parish. Whoever is elected will be spread thinly across a large patch when the new regime comes fully into effect in 2023. It will be a busy and challenging role.

Finally, I want to thank all my fellow Councillors for being available, responsive, and willing to lead and support a range of recurring and one-off project activities to support the parish over the year. The council could not operate effectively without your dedication and commitment.

Best Regards and a safe and prosperous 2022 to all residents of our Parish.

Allan Mortimer
Chairman