

Chairman's Annual Report 2018-19

This Council year has been memorable in a number of ways with a start on building the Leisure Centre and the commemorations of one hundred years since the end of the First World War.

On Sunday the 11th of November, Broughton Astley Parish Council supported the Royal British Legion and the churches of the village to hold the 100th Commemoration of the End of World War One outside at the War Memorial. A very large attendance of residents took part in a moving ceremony to remember all of those who had been lost in conflict, not just in the First World War but in all conflicts. After feedback from residents and the organisations involved it was agreed that holding the ceremony outside allowed many more people to attend than would normally be the case when having the service inside the Church and so the plan is for the 2019 service to be run in the same way. We hope that another large turn out will pay their respects.

Harborough District Council donated a silhouette of a WWI tommy which we have installed in the corner of the memorial ground and also part funded a bench which is located in the middle of the village opposite the Cooperative store which has proved popular with the more elderly residents.

The Parish Council, having had the memorial repaired and cleaned previously also replaced the waste bin outside the memorial grounds with one with a suitable motif for the hundredth's anniversary. It also purchased and installed a semi-circular bench in the memorial grounds which is located around one of the main trees, providing a suitable place to sit and reflect on those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

There is one further bench which is yet to be installed in a suitable location.

Finally, in relation to the 100th Centenary year, the Parish Council arranged for the sponsorship of the large lamp post poppies and the Parish Office staff organised a War themed dinner and music evening both of which were well received and supported. A grand total of £1073.00 was raised by both events for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

The Council finishes the 2018-19 year with a full compliment of Parish Councillors having co-opted two new councillors during the course of the year. With the upcoming elections in May 2019, it is encouraging that additional candidates have been proposed so that elections will take place in some of the wards. It should be noted that although we still have 16 Councillors, the wards have been re-aligned to better balance the number of residents within a ward and are Broughton North, Broughton South, Astley, Primethorpe and Sutton,

We have received a clear audit for the financial year 2018-19, maintaining the very high standards we have come to expect. It recognised good management and sound

controls are in place. I would like to point out that this is achieved by the hard work of the Parish staff supported by our Scrutiny committee and the Admin & Finance committee who regularly review our procedures to make sure they are up to date with changing regulations and to adopt the most appropriate methods of transacting our business efficiently. Such work is not glamorous but essential in delivering public services.

As part of our plan to finance the new Leisure centre, a significant part of the large reserves we had accumulated have been used. However, we still retain a sound level of reserves as is prudent for a council of our size. As predicted in my report last year, with rising costs and reduced central funding, this year we have had to raise the Parish precept by 4.5%. (equivalent to £4.19 per Band D property). This is mainly driven by salary costs which are nationally agreed and outside of our control, plus a range of increases for services.

The 2019-20 Parish Precept will be £306,556. With central government funding being further restricted we can envisage further increases in the precept next year, but we will work to limit these where we can whilst maintaining services.

In terms of staffing this year sees the retirement of Rodney Briggs after 27 years of service. It is extremely rare for people to dedicate their lives to one organisation and Broughton Astley has been very fortunate that Rodney did just that. He has ensured the facilities our residents have enjoyed over many years have been of the highest standard. On behalf of the Parish Council I wish to record our thanks and wish him and his family well for the future.

We also welcome Anita Percy to the team, working in our busy Parish office. Her role is a part time receptionist.

In previous years the Parish Council extended the number of allotments and improved facilities on the allotments. After years of having a waiting list, we are in the rare position of having 8 allotments available for rent. We expect these to be taken up now that the spring weather has arrived.

One of the most significant events in the recent history of Broughton Astley was the start of work on the Broughton Astley Leisure Centre on the newly acquired land adjacent to Thomas Estley Community College. A Leisure facility has been in various District and Parish plans for over twenty years and it is finally becoming a reality.

It has taken five long years since the referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan in January 2014 to reach this point. The Leisure Centre will be owned by the Parish Council with the majority of the funding coming from the developer contributions for the two new estates being built and a public works loan taken out by the Parish Council. No funding was made available from Harborough District Council.

The centre will be run by Parkwood Leisure on a twenty-year contract. The local schools, particularly Thomas Estley Community College will be making use of the

centre. Space has been set aside to allow for the future provision of a swimming pool should funding be located. Whilst there has been some discussion in social media about the desire for a pool, the Parish Council has been clear from the time of the leisure survey in 2013 and the Neighbourhood Plan that once funding could be secured to make it possible then the Parish Council would progress with building one. At this point in time, no new funding sources have been identified to cover the estimated £3.5 million pounds required.

The planned opening date for the Centre is early December 2019 and the Parish Council will keep residents updated on progress through our Facebook, page and website and notifications in local magazines. I look forward to the opening event as a clear demonstration of what can be delivered by a Parish Council.

Space has also been set aside for a new medical centre and the Parish Council is actively encouraging the Orchard Medical practice and the local Care Commissioning group to make clear their plans to build the much-needed new centre.

Thanks to good weather the summer Carnival organised by the local charity group, Broughton Alive which the Parish Council supported attracted one of the largest turnouts in recent memory. The Parish Council provides the use of the Village Hall for the day which allows school choirs and local dance troupe to perform to family and friends. It should be noted that many other local villages no longer manage to organise such events so the role of the Parish Council should be recognised in making such community events possible.

Similarly, the annual Christmas Fayre and Light Switch-On proved popular with a large turn out once again. The Parish Council is the major sponsor for the event with a donation of £1750 and work with Broughton Alive to synchronise the Light Switch on and in return received a donation from the shops who stay open late on the evening of the switch on with the strict stipulation that the donation is used to fund the Christmas lights themselves.

In a similar vein the Parish Council continues to operate as the “enabler” rather than the organiser” for many activities in the village. The Village Hall is busy being used by a wide variety of groups catering for all age groups. We will continue support groups where possible within the financial constraints we have to work within.

Our children’s play area is still considered to be one of the best in the area, attracting families from both the village and the surrounding area.

We organised the annual Carol Concert in the Village Hall which this year had the South Leicestershire Salvation Army band. This year £600 was raised from local residents and a top up donation from the Parish Council.

One issue which arose through the year was that of Public Open Space. Although this is primarily a District Planning matter, the Parish Council has supported

residents in their submissions to resist building on these plots of land. The Parish Council has provided grant support to a new group Broughton Open Space Society whose aim is to promote the protection and maintenance of open space in the village. This fledgling organisation is working with the District Council as do we and I expect further developments over the next Council year.

Clive Grafton-Reed

Chairman – Broughton Astley Parish Council.