



GRANGE PARK PARISH COUNCIL

Grange Park Community Centre, School Lane,
Grange Park, Northampton NN4 5FZ

www.grangeparkpc.org

Annual Report 2016/17 Chairman's Report

How time flies! It hardly seems a moment since reporting at the Annual Parish Meeting last May. Once again it is time to reflect upon the busy workings of the Council.

My report below is a summary of our activities during the year. Should you wish to learn more about the role and work of the Council, further details can be found on our website or by contacting any of the Councillors or the Clerk.

www.grangeparkpc.org email: Parishclerk@grangeparkpc.org

We all take our roles seriously and recognise our obligation to represent the interests of all residents when taking decisions. It is pleasing to receive positive feedback from visitors to the parish who often comment on the quality of the facilities and open space amenity.

The Council held 12 statutory meetings during the year including the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual General Meeting. Meetings are normally held every first Thursday of the month at Grange Park Community Centre and we welcome all parishioners to attend. We always provide an opportunity for questions, concerns or comments to be raised at the start of each meeting.

Agenda and Minutes of our meetings are displayed on the notice board located outside the Community Centre, Co-op and Foxfield's Pavilion. These are also posted on our website which we are looking to transition to a new supplier within the next couple of months.

We welcome to all our meetings our Country Councillor, Michael Clarke (recently re-elected) who supports us and acts on our behalf regarding the delivery and performance of County Council Services. We are also pleased to see both our District Councillors Adil Sadygov and Andrew Grant who regularly attend our meetings and provide a vital link between us and the District Council.

Parish Councils are under increasing pressure to take on new responsibilities and it is important that we keep up to date with developments and legislation. We remain members of the National and County Association of Local Councils and our Clerk is a member of the Society for Local Council Clerks. These organisations provide support to the Clerk and Councillors and they are our first port of call when we require advice and guidance.

We attend training courses to ensure that we keep up to date and have recently hosted a 'Flying Start Course' at Foxfield's which was led by Bill Robinson of NCalc and all councillors and staff were invited to attend. This course is designed to help make an early, effective and confident start to their careers, by providing quality, constructive and participative training on the roles and responsibilities of Clerks and Councillors

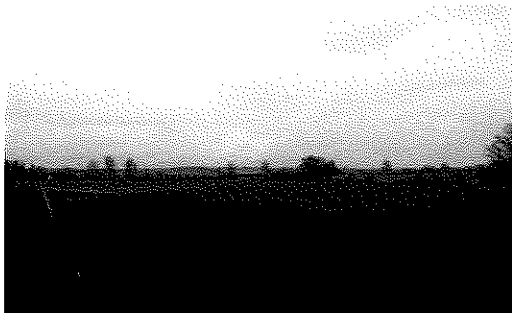
This Year we have also been consulted and responded to a variety of planning applications and numerous consultation documents from the District Council.

We continue to work closely with our Highways Liaison Officer at Northampton Council. Parked cars and speeding through the Parish have remained some of our main issues this last year. In consultation with Highways, we have installed double yellow lines within Bridge Meadow Way and Saxon Avenue but often get reports of cars mounting the pavement to park causing damage to the grass verges. We continue to monitor the situation and work with the relevant authorities to consider possible solutions.

Following resident feedback, Highways recently arranged for signs advising 'Unsuitable for HGV's' to be installed at the entrance to the housing areas. Whilst these signs are purely advisory anecdotal evidence suggests that they have been successful in steering away misguided lorries following their satellite navigation systems.

We are also very grateful to Northamptonshire Highways for the remedial works within the bridleway at Foxfield's and widening the footpath at the end of Lark Lane/Quinton Road. We are still under consultation on alternatives to the proposed one-way system at School Lane, following feedback from residents.

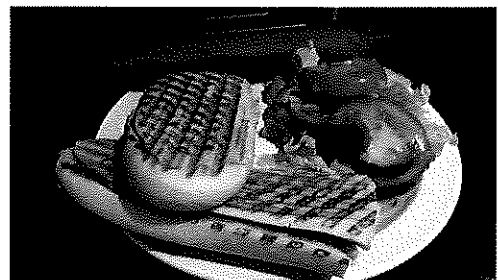
This year we continue with our appointed Landscape Contractors R&G. We remain extremely pleased with the level and quality of service they have provided and we hope you would agree that the many verges, green open spaces (including Wootton Brook and Foxfield Country Parks) are generally always looking at their best. The grass cutting and grounds maintenance is one of our main items of expenditure which reflects the fact that we have the largest areas of open space of all parishes in the District.



Foxfield Football Pitches and Cricket Square are a great parish asset and the Council work in partnership with Grange Park Rangers, Grange Park and Horton Cricket Club groups to ensure it is well kept and maintained for the benefit of all.

Regular inspections are carried out by R&G to ensure that the pitches are secure and safe. The Council holds regular meetings with key representatives from the sports groups and are extremely grateful to them and all the group members for their hard work.

We have also been working very hard to secure the best leisure social and recreation opportunities for all our residents to enjoy which includes the use of our Café/Bar within the Community Centre. Over the last year, it has grown, expanded with a new varied food menu, the appointment of a café/ bar supervisor, introduction of two draught beers/cider, quality coffee machine, comfy lounge area with leather sofa and tub chairs.



Councillors have also given up their time to upgrade and refurbish the café/bar area with the redecoration of the lounge area and the installation of a new kitchen. Themed/Quiz nights have also been held. If you any ideas for events or other activities then please let us know.

We always aim to spend our money wisely. This year we have received some additional funding from the New Homes Bonus Scheme and in addition to other projects, we are in the process of replacing our legacy CCTV systems at both of our Community sites. The increased coverage and performance has already paid dividends.

Our Thursday night Youth Club continues to thrive, offering a wide range of activities for children aged from 9 – 14 years old. Total children registered is now around 400 although recent attendance levels have been 70-90. New equipment has been purchased and upgraded including table tennis and air hockey tables, Craft materials and a PS4.

Turning to the allotments, Grange Park Parish Council are working with Northampton County Council to secure the best design for both the plot holders and to meet our planning obligations for the vehicle entrance in Lark Lane. We have finally received an acceptable design and quote. Plans can be viewed on <http://snc.planning-register.co.uk/plandisp.aspx?recno=67284>

Grange Park Summer Fest and Firework display events have continued to grow and are now bigger and better than the first ones held some years ago now. Both events have retained their great community spirit that has been commented on by many people over the years. This last year was no exception with the help and support of Parish Councillors, staff and their families, local voluntary groups and businesses providing a fun day/evening for us all. It also included the inaugural "Ash dash" in memory of our late friend and councillor, Stuart Ash.

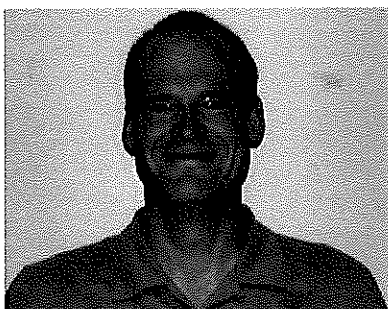


We have confirmed the dates for our 2017 calendar which are:-

Sunday 27th August - Summer Fest
Saturday 4th November - Firework display

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for all their hard work during the past year, for which they receive no financial reward. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to our Clerk, Tracy, Office and Caretaking staff for the hard work, commitment and flexibility they have demonstrated over the last year.

Chairman- Cllr R. Martin Smith



FINANCE

The Parish Council receives income from several sources, but the main one is our precept, which residents pay as part of the Council Tax. Despite increasing pressures, we have worked hard to establish a reasonable budget for 2017/18 and the charge this year will be £88.03 for a band D property equivalent to an increase of approximately 8p per week. There is partly a defensive play in that central government have talked about future increase caps plus we have an ever increasing demand for tree work across the parish. Of the sums raised by precept, just over 50% goes toward the upkeep of the green open spaces within Grange Park including the football pitches, cricket square, playparks, grass verges, hedgerow and both Country Park Wootton and Foxfield. The rest maintains our buildings, provides youth club, administration and staffing costs, emptying of refuse and dog bins, plus small grants for local organisations.

Grange Park Parish Council Tax Charge for 201718			
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Summary			
Precept	£130,314.50	£137,500.00	£144,300.00
Tax Base	1626.70	1635.40	1639.20
Annual Charge			
Band D Property	£80.11	£84.08	£88.03
Previous year's charge	3.00%	3.97%	3.95%