



Annual Report 2017/18

Chairman's Report

The past year has been another busy one in the life of Grange Park Parish Council, with a number of milestones and successes.

Perhaps most notable (for the time it has taken!) is the culmination of five years' hard work coming to fruition, when Grange Park Parish Council, working in partnership with Northampton County Council and local contractors completed the highways entrance to the allotments at Lark Lane.

More broadly I am particularly grateful for the help that is given to me as Chairman, and the way in which we work together as a team. We actively encourage residents to use the Parish Office as a focal point to feedback their concerns, suggestions and observations, where they can be dealt with, and progress monitored.

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

The Council held 12 statutory meetings during the year including the Annual Parish Meeting and Annual General Meeting. Meetings are normally held every first Thursday of the month (no meeting in August) 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 boards located outside the Community Centre, Co-op and Foxfield's Pavilion. These are also posted on our website which we are in course of transitioning to a new supplier over the next couple of months.

We welcome to all our meetings our County Councillor, Michael Clarke who supports us and acts as liaison between the Parish and County Council. We are also pleased to see both our District Councillors Adil Sadygov and Andrew Grant who regularly attend our meetings and who likewise provide a vital link between us and the District Council.

Our successful partnership with appointed Landscape Contractors R&G continues into its fifth year. We remain extremely pleased with the level and quality of service they provide, 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.

As many of you will know, there is the perennial threat to our Parish from travellers. Amongst the projects this year and in conjunction with Bellway, we have installed more preventative measures at Wootton Brook with the intent of prohibiting unauthorised access to the site. In addition to the installation of a new height restricted barrier we have recently installed three 1.5m diameter barrier rings which have been filled and planted. As we move towards taking legal transfer of the site, we were keen to do the best we could to limit unwanted access which would likely cost several thousand pounds of taxpayer's money each time, to clear up.



At the back of Bluebell Rise leading to Alamein woods, drainage works have been undertaken to extend from the ditch on the Wake Estate side to intercept a land drain which was discharging water towards local gardens that historically have flooded. For the Southern boundary a porous pipe has been laid along the side of the pathway to intercept run off from the Wake estate. Each of these will feed into the pond, helping to sustain water levels. The football pitch drainage has also been extended to catch the water running off the bank. Whilst ground conditions have by necessity been unsettled, given the potential for flooding in residents homes, we hope you agree the short term inconvenience is a fair price to pay.



We continue to monitor and improve the overall appearance of the public open spaces by upgrading the playparks following recommendations from RoSPA, refurbishment of the broken benches at the oval and the planters outside the Community Centre.

The Parish Council has carried out a programme of repairs and refurbishment to both our community buildings (Community Centre and Foxfield Pavilion). We secured a New Homes Bonus grant to provide energy efficiency L.E.D lighting at both the above sites. At the Community Centre, we are also planning to install air conditioning in the working areas, acoustic boarding in the Small Hall and new external fire doors.



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.

As well as monitoring and reviewing staff performance, we ensure the continued professional development of our staff and councillors, who are actively encouraged to undertake new and refresher training courses. We continue to review and implement our duties and responsibilities and remain committed to being a caring employer.

Within the confines of our budget, we try to secure the best leisure social and recreational opportunities for all our residents to enjoy, including the use of our Café/Bar within the Community Centre. Over the last year, the Café/Bar has expanded with a new varied hot food menu, bespoke birthday bookings, organised events e.g. Christmas Fayre and Macmillan Coffee Mornings, loyalty cards, small recreational space for young children to enjoy colouring, puzzles and a small selection of toys. In addition it is pleasing that we are able to provide employment opportunities whilst enhancing the amenity of our core facility.



The project to upgrade the CCTV systems at both sites is ongoing but has already proven valuable in identifying the culprits for a number of minor offences. In addition, the ability to view both sites remotely has improved the efficiency of our site team.

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 are now around 400 with average attendance levels consistently running around 80-90. New equipment has been purchased and upgraded including table tennis and air hockey tables, Craft materials and a PS4. If you could spare a few hours once a month to provide support to the core team, then please get in touch with the office or come along to a session to see how it goes.

Grange Park Summer Fest and Firework Display

Both events remain popular albeit subject to the prevailing weather conditions. Anecdotally the attendance at the Firework Display was bigger than ever resulting in us running out of food supplies. Once again the feedback has been excellent fostering great community spirit. The success is largely due to 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 second annual "Ash dash" in memory of our late friend and councillor, Stuart Ash.

The dates for our 2018 calendar are confirmed as: -

***Sunday 26th August 2018– Summer Fest &
Saturday 3rd November 2018 – Firework Display***



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 set what we believe to be a reasonable budget for 2018/19 and the charge this year will be £91.96 for a band D property. Whilst the increase of 4.5% seems high in percentage terms, the absolute amount is modest at under £4. This is partly a defensive play in that central government have talked about future increase caps set against 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 support, administration and staffing costs, emptying of refuse and dog bins, plus small grants for local organisations.

Grange Park Parish Council Tax Charge for 2018/19			
Summary	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Precept	£137,500	£144,300	£151,839.63
Tax Base	1635.40	1639.20	1651.10
Annual Charge			
Band D Property	£84.08	£88.03	£91.96
Previous year's charge	£3.97	£3.95	£3.93

The Parish Council is very proud of its local voluntary and community sector and tries to support local groups and activities. Grants should be in the interests of, and bring direct benefit to the parish and its residents. Funding may be given to a charitable or not-for-profit body for the furtherance of its work in the local community.

This year Grange Park Parish Council has awarded grants to the following clubs: Grange Park Rangers Football Club, Grange Park Guides, Rainbows and Brownies.

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for all their hard work during the past year, for which they receive no financial reward. As reflected above, the two main events could not be the success they are without that support. In particular, I would like to recognise the significant contribution from Cllr Allan Huddart who been instrumental in making a number of material improvements to the Café/Bar over the last few years.

Finally, I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to our Parish Clerk-Tracy, Café/Bar Manager Louise and her team; our Caretaking staff-Steve, Graham, John and Lorraine for the hard work, commitment and flexibility they have once again demonstrated over the last year. Without them, the Parish would not be the success it is. Thank you.



Chairman- Cllr R. Martin Smith