

GRANGE PARK PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Report 2018/19

Chairman's Report

It is with great pleasure that I present the Chairman's report for the year ending 31st March 2019.

The Parish Council has had a typically busy year although there have been times when it feels that it has somewhat been dominated by proposed development activities both within and adjacent to the Parish. Sadly, I fear that with Central Government fuelling the rush to build ever more houses to meet increasing demands, this will be the way of things to come for the foreseeable future.

I attach a map showing the various sites either proposed, underway or speculated upon within our parish.



More information can be viewed at
<http://www.manoroakhomes.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/GRA-046-41208-Grange-Park-Consultation-boards-V10-final-low-res.pdf>

The last year saw changes to the Parish Council with Mark Plowman and Allan Huddart standing down as Councillors. Whilst it is always sad to lose Councillors the 'other side of the coin' is that we were fortunate in being able to welcome Richard Knott, Julie Bainbridge and Michelle Hobbs onto the Parish Council and, with them, we will enjoy a host of new expertise and ideas. It is always sad news when one of our Councillors passes away, Tony Walker died suddenly at the beginning of the year. Tony sat on Grange Park Parish Council for over 15 years, he worked tirelessly to preserve the character of the Parish and steered the council through many challenging issues. He will be sadly missed as a friend and colleague. As a tribute to Tony, Grange Park Parish Council have named the main hall at Foxfield Pavilion.



Over the last year we have worked hard to increase the use of our halls both at the Community Centre and Foxfield Pavilion. Both provide great facilities for the community and those visiting our Parish. Grange Park Community Centre has two rooms and a Café/Bar available to hire, the level of repeat bookings indicate that we are providing good quality facilities at a reasonable price. Over the last couple of months, the Council had real concerns about hall usage and applied for Grant funding in order to complete a series of improvements. The result is that this year 2019/20 I am pleased to let you know that funding has been awarded and over the next few months you will see all washrooms and kitchens upgraded at the Community Centre.

Keeping in touch with residents of the Parish, neighbouring parishes and statutory bodies such as South Northants, Northampton County Council and Northants Police is something that we are always looking to undertake as effectively as we can. To this end Cllr Pete Sansom has worked with 2commune to create a new vibrant website - www.grangeparkpc.org. The Parish Council website contains information about Community Activities, local facilities including the hiring of our halls, the services and functions of the Parish Council and contact details of the Parish Clerk and Councillors. There is an A-Z directory to help you find all the information and contacts you need. We also do regular information feeds on the Grange Park Facebook page. In addition to producing leaflets, posters and banners advertising events.

No Annual Report would be complete without commenting on the monthly litter picks this year which have been organised by Julie Bainbridge of the Bertie Bottle Scheme in partnership with the Parish Council. I know that many of you share the views of all of us about the anti-social individuals, many of them residents of the Parish, that feel it is acceptable to drop litter or fly tip rubbish that other people have to pick up. I would personally like to thank Julie for her organisational skills and especially those 45+ members of the community that turned up on 3rd March to help clear up. The Community Litter picks are scheduled for the first Sunday of each month and everyone is welcome to attend.



Grange Park Parish Council offers a limited number of grants each year to non-profit making groups and Charities which provide a service in the Parish to its residents.

Examples of Grants Awarded

1st GP RAINBOWS

Financial Year: 2018/19

Amount: 250.00

2nd GP BROWNIES

Financial Year: 2018/2019

Amount: £760.00

1st GP GUIDES

Financial Year: 2018/19

Amount: 250.00

GRANGE PARK SCOUT GROUP

Financial Year: 2018/2019

Amount: £500.00

The Parish Council would be nothing without our hard working and dedicated staff consisting of our Parish Clerk, Tracy, Helen as Parish Administrator, Katie as Café/Bar Manager and the Caretaking Staff, Steve, Graham, John and Lorraine. We are very lucky to have such a first-class team that deal with all the demands put upon them in a friendly and efficient way. On behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to sincerely thank them.

Not forgetting of course my fellow Councillors who give up much of their time to make things better for everyone, and importantly those people who are not members of the Council who volunteer for a wide variety of roles from running various clubs, picking up litter, managing football teams and allotments.

A few of our councillor giving up their Sunday morning to fix fences that have been damaged/vandalised in Lark Lane.



We also 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.

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.

I am very proud to have been Chairman of Grange Park Parish Council since 2011, it is a role that I take very seriously and, if it the wish of my fellow councillors, I look forward to the challenges over the next twelve months.

Thank you

Cllr Martin Smith, Chairman of Grange Park Parish 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

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR YEAR APRIL 2018- MARCH 2019

Grange Park Parish Council are extremely fortunate in having investments that allow us to undertake a great many more activities that would not be possible if relying on only receiving the precept. In any year, there are always expenses that are not expected and last financial year was no exception. We saw big bills for maintaining our green open space, our Football pitches and the refurbishment of paths within Foxfield Country Park .

Some of Grange Park Parish Council funds are currently held by South Northants Council and with the abolition to make way for the two new unitary authorities the Parish Council have decided to move the money we hold in cash reserves to CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund.

Despite increasing pressures, we have worked hard to set what we believe to be a reasonable budget for 2019/20 and the charge this year will be £95.94 for a band D property. Whilst the increase of 4.28% seems high in percentage terms, the absolute amount is modest at under £4 per week.

Grange Park Parish Council Tax Charge for 2019/20

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Summary				
Precept	£137,500.00	£144,300.00	£151,839.63	£157,913.22
Tax Base	1635.40	1639.20	1650.5	1645.9
Band D Property	£84.08	£88.03	£92.00	£95.94
Increase	£3.97	£3.95	£3.97	£3.95

Meeting next year's budget, considering all the projects we want to pursue, will not be easy, but, the Parish Council especially the Finance Working Group are committed to getting the best value possible. In addition, we will look to obtain grant funding for projects where this is available. Budgets are set to ensure adequate provision is made to cover the cost of public areas and playground maintenance, halls running cost and paying our staff, amongst many others cost. We also have various projects each year which are carefully considered to ensure public money is spent with due consideration. The funding required to meet our expenditure is achieved from a combination of the precept, investment income and revenue from the halls.

The Parish Council is far from complacent we are always looking to offer even better facilities for residents with financial management being at the core. With such significant proposed development planned over the foreseeable future, we are going to come under increasing pressure from our facilities being used and hopefully we will be able to negotiate with developers to make a financial contribution to mitigate the 'wear and tear' on our assets.

ENVIRONMENT

Our successful partnership with appointed Landscape Contractors R&G continues into its sixth 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.

The Parish Council in May appointed two Lead Councillors A Millerchip and N Stansfield to manage all Environmental issues within the Parish and report back at monthly meetings.

At the beginning of the year it was noted that the new drainage system installed at the top of Bluebell Rise is working well, the ground is much dryer on the top side of the path. For the Southern Boundary, our contractors installed 291 m of 75mm porous pipe that was laid along the side of the pathway to intercept run off from the Wake estate. There will be a continuous fall from each end of the drain to the ditch in the centre which feeds the pond.

Whilst work was being done at Foxfields Country Park and machinery on site the Parish Council instructed our contractor to look at the drainage on the football pitches. This project involved a 60m extension of the primary drain of the top pitch to catch the water running off the bank. A 75mm porous land drain was laid 600mm deep and covered with aggregate.

Grange Park Parish Council play an important part in Keeping the Parish Clean. We have this year installed new larger dog bins at various locations. We empty our dog bins at varying frequencies to reflect the level of usage and maintain capacity. We make repairs as quickly as possible, but we may have to wait for replacement parts.



Vandals have also damaged the flooring at the park adjacent to Woodland View School this year. It is so frustrating when we have spent some much money on a total refurbishment and so quickly it gets damaged. I encourage any residents to report every incident or damage to the playparks to the Parish Council.



All white lining for parking facilities has been restored at both sites.

The lease hold of Wootton Country Park has now been legally transferred to the Parish Council and therefore all maintenance issues will be our responsibility. The land will be managed with a light touch in order to develop the ecology of the meadow. However, there are several areas where some works may be required to make it safe by clearing areas of debris/dead/unstable trees. The Parish Council are looking into appointing a Tree Arbor culturist to do a survey. A tree policy has been adopted and can be viewed on our website.

www.grangeparkpc.org



This year some renovation and reseeding works took place on the paths at Foxfield Country Park. The works included the excavation of soil from edge of path and then dressed with self-binding gravel and Coxwell Stone.



Grange Park Parish Council are always considering ways to protect their open recreation land to make it less vulnerable to invasion by travellers. Over the last few years the Parish have been exposed to illegal encampments because it has open land, secluded by trees.

Last year we installed a new height restricted barrier and three 1.5m diameter barrier rings at Wootton Country park.



This year we have installed Manchester Bollards at all entrances to Foxfield Country Park.

CAFÉ/BAR UPDATE

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. The Café/Bar manager has worked extremely hard this year and is always actively seeking the views of customers by using social media and leaving feedback forms on proposed events, menu options and staff recruitment

All food is prepared fresh on order, the Café/Bar offers jacket potatoes as well as a selection of sandwiches and pani at a reasonable price to eat in or take way.



Over the last year, the Café/Bar has held the following events which have been well attended and proved popular:



COMMUNITY EVENTS.

August 2018 saw the day for our '**Summer Fest**' where all the preparations were in place to have outside live bands, numerous fun inflatables, stalls, bar and BBQ. Unfortunately, due to the exceptional weather conditions of heavy rain, the Parish Council had to cancel.



The popular **Fireworks** event follows in early November, It now has a reputation for being the local fireworks event where families come along and enjoy the event, BBQ and bar.

Winter arrives, and Christmas immediately appears on the agenda. Decorating the Halls was followed by the organisation of the **Christmas Winter Wonderland**. The winter wonderland took place on 15th December and the Parish Council rented a synthetic ice rink, Children's fun fair rides, Santa's Grotto, food, live music and festive stalls and opened the café/bar where visitors could get a selection of hot festive food and drinks. Although enjoyed and appreciated by everyone who attended, the weather was again not on our side.



Due to the awful weather condition at both the Summer Fest and Christmas Winter Wonderland , the Parish Council have therefore decided that in 2019 we would change the Summer Fest date to June and have a Christmas Fayre inside on the 7th December 2019. We appreciate resident's attendance and support at these events.

YOUTH CLUB

I would like to personally thank the volunteers at Youth Club who dedicate their own free time and energy on a weekly basis as without them the club would not function.

The Youth Club runs every Thursday during school term and is open to 9-14year olds. The new term started in September 2018 and was initially very well attended. We had to take the decision of restricting new members so that the numbers were more manageable.

We have used some of the funds this year to organise a Chrisman's Party where all members received a selection box and Easter Eggs given out at Easter.

We have continued our membership of the NAYC (Northampton Association of Youth Club)

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.