

GRANGE PARK PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Report 2019/20

Chairman's Report

What a difference a few months make, I could never have imagined that I would be writing this with our community, like our country and many parts of the world, in lockdown.

It has been a busy year and we have made progress on several long-standing projects. Our focus is on what we can deliver locally. I would also like to thank my fellow councillors for their contributions.

Our Community Centre, Café/Bar and Foxfield Pavilion are continuing to be well used with our regular groups of Girl Guides, Scouts, Youth Club, Mums & Tots, Ballet, Kumon, Tumble Tots, Afterschool club and Preschool etc. Although we were sad to hear that our long-standing WI group stopped running at the end of 2019 due to falling attendance. If you know of any groups that would like to use the facilities or have any thoughts on social events. Please email our office staff.

The Café/Bar are looking to organise more social events and intend to schedule at least one event per month. The most popular event so far has been the Gin & Karaoke nights.

This year we again successfully held our usual two Community events; the hot and sunny 'Summer Fest' held at Foxfield Country Park in June which included Bands, BBQ, Bar, Children's entertainment. This was followed by our not so sunny Firework Display in November, which was well attended and based on feedback received, appreciated by all. Many thanks to our team of Cllrs, staff and volunteers who work so hard on these days, and our local scout group who help collect the donations at the display.



We have a small grant fund to enable us to support local groups with grants and this year we have been delighted to be able to support Grange Park Pre-school, Grange Park Rainbows and Grange Park Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. If you would like an application form, please email the Parish Clerk at parishclerk@grangeparkpc.org

On behalf of the Councillors, I would like to say a big thank you to all our staff for all the hard work they do to ensure the Parish is runs smoothly, day to day. Our caretaking team have taken on a range of maintenance tasks. This includes some environmental works such as designing /planting the flower beds outside the Community Centre and the re-planting of a tree in fond memory of former Councillor Stuart Ash. Their enthusiasm has been rewarded by the purchase of various power tools!



The hard work and dedication of our teams enable us to deliver projects and to enhance our parish and support the community of Grange Park. Additional support comes from the numerous unsung heroes of the Parish, who volunteer to run the Youth Club, Litter pick, Environmental Audits and organise Community Events.

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. All parishioners are welcome to attend. There is a section at the start of the agenda open to public questions where any questions or concerns can be raised.

We publish information relating to our activities on our website www.grangeparkpc.org including the minutes of meetings from the last 12 months.

We also welcome to our monthly 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 our District Councillor Andrew Grant who regularly attend our meetings and who likewise provide a vital link between us and the District Council.

Stay Safe everyone!

Cllr Martin Smith, Chairman of Grange Park Parish Council



My report below is a brief summary of some 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

FINANCE

I have detailed below our current income and expenditure for the year 2019/20. As you may recall from previous reports, there is a significant focus and cost attributed to the management of open spaces. In the last year, there was a particular focus on establishing a multi-year tree management plan-see below for further details. This has allowed us to target our activities and finances more effectively.

Summary of Accounts for 2019/20

	Income	Expenditure
C/F from previous Year	£89,810.73	
Income for 2019/20	£367,755.93	
Grant Funding	£14,797.17	
Expenditure 2019/20		£394,592.89
TOTAL	£472,363.83	£394,592.89
BALANCE	£77,770.94	
Allocated for Projects	£69,591.17	
C/F Balance to 2021	£8,179.77	

This year we have been able to keep the increase of the Parish element of the Council tax for average band D Property to 7p per week in 2020/21, contributing to increasing costs.

Our predicted budget expenditure for 2020/21 is as follows:

Community Buildings	Environmental	Other Services
£50,000	£120,000	172,000

Since 2003 when the Parish Council was formed, the S106 developer funds have been held in a central account with South Northants Council. As a consequence of the intended move to unitary authorities and with a view to increasing returns, the balance was transferred to the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund.

ENVIRONMENT

Our contract for open space management has continued in partnership with R&G Landscapes. We are pleased with the quality of their workmanship and we feel represents good value for money. This is one area that attracts regular feedback, usually positive but occasionally negative. Please continue to feedback as this helps us prioritise activity.

The weather has proved challenging for the management of pitches at Foxfield and R&G are continuing yearly pitch improvement programmes which includes aerating, verti-drain and fertilizing. We also renovated all the shrub beds this year removing invasive species and replanting bare patches.

In 2019, the Parish Council appointed a tree consultant to carry out an inventory and condition survey of all significant trees within the amenity and communal areas of Grange Park. As you walk around, you may have seen evidence of his work with metal id tags on specimen trees. The purpose of this survey is to indicate which works are required for risk management and this tagging makes it easy to focus on the correct trees.

A 3-year management schedule was created for each tree (or group) and these have been prioritised as follows:

- Phase 1 - All tree works that need attention within the first year (21) trees
- Phase 2 - The Spinney Woods – (38) trees
- Phase 3 – Remainder of works required within two years (10 trees)
- Phase 4 - Tree removal within 3 years (6 trees)
- Phase 5 - Remainder of works required within three years (treatment rather than removal)
- Phase 6 – Page 13 of the report (46 trees) – remove base or shoots all within Foxfield Park

The Parish Council have already completed both phases 1 & 2 and the remaining phases are scheduled for later this year (2020).



Following inspiration from Cllr. Mark Wilson, we were pleased to have undertaken our first tree planting exercise. Bare root tree saplings were awarded from The Woodland Trust and an event was organised in November where both councillors and members of the public planted over 200 trees at the site adjacent to the allotments at Lark Lane.



We are currently reviewing the issue of parking on grass verges following a number of complaints. Parking of vehicles on grass verges causes damage over time and they look unsightly. The Parish Council are encouraging all residents and visitors alike to refrain from parking on the verges. Alternative measures are currently being discussed with Northampton Highways as reseeding may not be the most effective solution.



In May, Cllrs. Andy Millerchip and Nigel Stansfield were appointed as lead councillors to manage Environmental issues within the Parish. This includes regular site inspections and report back at monthly meetings.

Grange Park Parish Council play are instrumental in keeping the Parish clean. This year with the help of 'Bertie Bottle' and Cllr Julie Bainbridge we have been able to organise monthly litter picks. We have used recycling bottles and filled them with dog waste bags and installed them on fences around the Country Park. A crisp packet recycling bin has also been organised and this is located inside the Community Centre and then sent to an official local crisp packet donation point in Northampton. The initiative attracted media coverage. Well done Julie.

PLANNING

In September 2019, a planning application was submitted by Manor Oak Homes for the outline planning permission of 300 dwellings and a primary school at the land south of Grange Park. With the help of our adjoining parishes, district councillors and letters from residents, we fought for the refusal of this application. On the 19th February at a South Northants Planning Committee Meeting the above application was refused due to- its location, the site was outside the village confines of Grange Park, in open countryside where large scale development is generally not considered. Also its proximity to the M1 motorway where residents including school children would potentially be exposed to high levels of air and noise pollution. This application will likely go to appeal, so it is important that you have your say. We will keep you posted via social media as to when this will happen and then you can go to www.southnorthants.gov.uk search for the planning application and submit your comments.

PROJECTS

Due to recent events a few of our projects have been postponed until later in the year: the installation of new Outdoor Gym Equipment to be installed at Foxfield Country Park, Fire exit doors at the Community Centre.



After 15 years of daily use we decided to apply for some funding from the New Homes Bonus Scheme to refurbish our washrooms and kitchens at the Community Centre. These works were completed during the school holidays to cause less disruption to our hirers. Users have commented favourably on the result.

We also installed a defibrillator at both our Community Sites. One installed in the foyer of the Community Centre and the other at the entrance to the changing rooms at Foxfield Pavilion.



YOUTH CLUB

The Youth Club usually runs every Thursday evening (6.30-8.30) during school term and is open to 9-14 year olds. The numbers have fallen away compared to previous years, which allowed us to admit children on the waiting list. We typically have around 55 attendees which is more manageable than the 100+ we had seen in previous years!

We have used some of the funds this year to organise a Christmas Party where all members received a selection box and Easter Eggs given out at Easter (delayed this year!). We have renewed our membership and affiliation with 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. We have a well rehearsed routine spread across the community centre building and MUGA so we need to have a minimum number of helpers to cover both all areas.

GOOD NEIGHBOURS SCHEME

With the recent events of Coronavirus the Parish Council have been working with the help of a local resident Mollie Diggin to print and circulate 1000 leaflets to all the vulnerable people in Grange Park and we are very grateful for those volunteers who helped post these. We are hoping that after everything settles down, we will be able to build on the Community Spirit and launch a Good Neighbour Scheme within our Parish. The scheme is run by local volunteers who provide the day to day support for other resident who may need help on occasions or a regular basis. If you are interested in volunteering your time please contact the Parish Clerk on parishclerk@grangeparkpc.org