

Flauden Parish Council

Chairman's Report for the Year 2013 – 2014

This is my eleventh annual report, and I am pleased to say I have the same councillors in office and the 'new' system of splitting the Clerk's role into three posts with Erik Vischer as Clerk, Linda Inchenko as Secretary and Jack Debnam as Responsible Financial Officer is working very well. They all work together to support your Parish Councillors and liaise with Herts County and Dacorum Borough Councils.

Your Parish Councillors all have portfolios for which they are responsible and for which they work diligently during the year.

John Newman is Highways

Pam Esom is Planning

Sheila Wade is the Community & Leisure

& Jill Saunders is the Environment

We have joined the Hertfordshire Association of Parish & Town Councils, aka HAPTC. Along with Erik, Linda, Jack and myself the councillors have attended training and liaison meetings during the year organised by Dacorum, Herts CC & HAPTC. Including a planning forum in July, the Annual Dacorum Parish Conference in Hemel in December, Herts CC Conference in Stevenage in April, the Dacorum Highways Liaison meeting in Hemel in April.

- **For Highways, John** liaises with Herts Highways trying to resolve issues, such as flooding, speeding & potholes. Heavy rain on 7th February which flooded, in different degrees, 5 houses in Hogpits, caused the most major problem this year, overtaking the accidents that have always occurred near Hollins Hall during icy weather. The PC supplied & filled 78 sandbags for distribution to those affected by the flooding. Thank you John for your hard work & perseverance.

Erik has also been involved in negotiating with the landowner for the siting of a borehole in the field next to Mauldens Lane, to alleviate future flooding issues. After starting the discussions he has now handed this over to the affected residents to organise.

Potholes still also cause major problems. Although some have recently been filled more permanently, there are still many large potholes on our roads. Please report them! The best way is through the Herts Highway website under "fault reporting". The more people who report faults, the more chance of repairs! The fact is reported problems are prioritised and if deemed of low importance, then they may never get resolved or at the very best it will take a long time. So, where possible self help is the answer!

Poppy seeds have been sown round the village gates as part of the nationwide Centenary Poppy Campaign to commemorate the beginning of the First World War.

We took advantage of Herts "Winter Self Help Scheme" & ordered bags of salt which were not needed as there was no big freeze this year! But they are stored ready for next year!

We thank Herts County Councillor, Richard Roberts for all the support he gives us with Highways issues and for sharing part of his Locality Budget on some of the village issues. & particularly this year for his support in organising the surfacing of part of the unsightly "swamp" on the verge near Hollins Hall leading to Bridleway 008, the ginger track. This has been caused by vehicles parking on it & driving across it to avoid oncoming traffic. We are now investigating ways to protect the whole verge area there so that the grass can recover.

- **For Planning, Pam** has dealt with 14 planning applications and 1 appeal this year. For every planning application that comes in she and Linda liaise with the appropriate Dacorum Planning Officers, Pam prepares a report and provides a pack of information & recommendations for the PC. Pam also attends planning seminars to keep up to date on new regulations & in October arranged a meeting for us with James Doe, Dacorum's Assistant Director of Planning, Development & Regeneration. Thank you Pam for your conscientious, hard work.
- **For the Environment, Jill** organised the ever popular annual Litter Blitz on 22nd March to clear rubbish from the lanes into and around Flaunden. 18 pickers, including, Jack Organ, one of our Dacorum Councillors, wore the Flaunden PC high visibility jackets and collected about 30 bags of rubbish. Thanks to Dacorum's Clean Safe & Green Team for providing litter pickers, bags & gloves. It is always amazing that so much rubbish is collected on Litter Blitz day when our village warden does such a brilliant job himself all year picking up rubbish in the village. They all deserve a big thank you. & thank you again to Alvin Michael at the Bricklayers Arms for treating all the "pickers" to their "traditional" & very welcome winter warmer afterwards. Thank you also to the villagers who regularly pick up rubbish as they pass. It makes a big difference to our village.

Jill is also responsible for reporting to Dacorum any problems with our network of footpaths & bridleways, such as broken kissing gates overgrown greenery and blocked paths. She has organised nature walks and is a mine of information about the flora & fauna of the village. Thank you Jill for your hard work and for sharing your knowledge about the environment with us.

The Parish Paths Partnership grant of £1000 comes via Groundwork, a company contracted by Dacorum and continues to benefit the walkers and riders round Flaunden.

We are very grateful to the Footpath Warden, Bruce Boshier & Pauline, his trusty walking companion. Thank you Bruce & Pauline for regularly walking all the footpaths & informing us of any problems and for giving us a report at our meetings. Because of this, the footpaths and bridleways continue to be kept maintained & useable. We have also this year had the help of William Taylor of Wynchcroft, who has been supporting Bruce by monitoring a circuit of the distant footpaths & bridleways as part of his bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award. So thank you William, too.

Continuing thanks go to Clayton Rae, the Herts Countryside Access Officer, based at Dacorum who manages the local DBC footpaths and bridleways and is always ready & willing to give support if it is needed.

- **For the Community, Sheila** has been involved in passing on information about a large variety of issues. Some are positive, some negative. But all impact on our village. Such as Police station closures, the Hospice of St Francis day centre, the possibility of a new community bus service, the Centre in the Park- a day community centre in Hemel. She has distributed leaflets round the village and is always ready to talk to villagers about issues that concern them. She is a good neighbour. Thank you Sheila.

A lot of good things have happened this year, including:

- The Village Hall has had a lot of decoration and renovation. For which the PC has been pleased to be able to make a significant contribution.

- It was the Church's 175th Anniversary and the PC also donated a significant amount towards a new organ.
- On 13th November Ken & Daph Lousvet were presented with tickets for a first class steam train ride round Kent as a thank you to Ken for his 12 plus years of service as Parish Clerk. This was made possible by the generous donations of grateful villagers. The trip took place on Saturday 26th April and both Ken & Daph had a great day out.
- The PC again sponsored a craft table at the annual Christmas Craft Fayre in December for 30+ children who had an enjoyable time making Christmas table decorations. Thanks to everyone who helped.
- The Flaunden Flyer is now eleven years old and about to produce its 22nd issue. The team deserve continued congratulations. The advertisers should also be thanked, as their support means that the Flyer has never needed a Parish Council subsidy. Moreover, funded out of the profits, The Flyer team organised another very enjoyable pancake race on 8th March and after 2 years of being indoors the races were held outside. Children and adults ran and tossed their pancakes, with the adults being far more competitive than the children! And then everyone enjoyed the bonus of lovely pancakes at the end. Well done Flyer Team.
- A record 72 children & 58 adults took part in the annual Easter egg treasure hunt on a lovely Easter Saturday, 19th April. After completing the treasure hunt sheets the families returned to the hall for well earned refreshments and the children enjoyed their chocolate eggs and the craft activities provided for them. Thanks to Ken for continuing to be responsible for decorating the hall so beautifully and to Daph and her volunteers for providing and serving the lovely refreshments.
- Our own Village Warden, Colin Gurney, continues to deliver an excellent job keeping the Village itself looking good, by going round the village litter picking, cleaning road signs, removing debris, clearing the areas around the village gates and digging out the grips which run into the ditches. To name just a few of his jobs! Colin & his son, Dan also refurbished the 6 village benches and repainted the direction sign at the top crossroads. Thank you Colin we all appreciate your efforts and support and are all so pleased you are willing to continue to be our village warden.
- Our Police Community Support Officer, PCSO Bardhyll Agallili visits the village occasionally & sends monthly updates on local crime, fortunately mostly the lack of it! But it is sad and disappointing that the local Police Officer & Bardy rarely attend our PC meetings. In fact I do not now know who our local Bobby is! However we are grateful to the neighbourhood watch co-ordinators who inform us of local issues. We have made several requests for the police to come to the village with speed cameras but as yet they have not appeared.
- A new bench has been purchased and is soon to be installed on the verge opposite the entrance to Flaunden Park. We hope the villagers who wait for the bus there will be able to make good use of it.
- The trainers hanging on the cable at the Bricklayers crossroad have been removed. This is good news!

If anyone has any problems regarding anything in the village please do not wait until a village hall meeting to raise your concerns, but contact Erik or Linda who will bring any issues to the Council's attention.

I thank Herts County Councillor Richard Roberts & Dacorum Councillors, Jack Organ and Gbola Adeleke for attending some of our PC meetings and supporting Flaunden's needs.

I also thank all the willing helpers for continuing to provide and serve the refreshments at our meetings.

I'm very fortunate to have the same councillors and officers staying in office again for the coming year . Sheila Wade, Jill Saunders, John Newman & Pam Esom. Erik Vischer, Linda Inchenko and Jack Debnam. Thank you all, for the care and time you take to support the people of Flaunden. Thank you team.

Flaunden is lucky to have so many talented, kind people who give their time willingly for the benefit of us all, including Bruce and Pauline Boshier who were the worthy recipients of the Peter Scribens silver salver last year for their outstanding contribution to the welfare of the village.

Each year we are grateful for the ease with which we are able to choose the next worthy recipient.

Thank you to everyone in Flaunden who helps to make our village the special place that it is.



Vivienne