

## Flaunden Parish Council

### Chairman's Report for the Year 2016 – 2017

This is my fourteenth annual report, with the officers, Linda Inchenko as Clerk and Jack Debnam as the Responsible Financial Officer. Pam Esom, John Newman, Jill Saunders, Keith Robinson and myself as Parish Councillors.

Each Councillor has an area of responsibility for which they work diligently during the year:

Pam Esom for Planning

Jill Saunders for the Environment

John Newman for Highways

Keith Robinson advice and support in all roles

We have attended various training and liaison meetings during the year, the Annual Dacorum Parish Conference in Hemel in December, the Dacorum Highways Liaison meetings, training for digital planning in November, plus other meetings regarding planning issues throughout the year. Linda has also attended training courses run by the Herts Association of Parish and Town Councils.

- **For Highways**, John continues to liaise with Herts Highways to try and get resolutions to the many highways problems. The main issues continue to be potholes, speeding traffic and verge erosion, with the addition of falling & lost road signs, gravel on the roads after heavy rain,

Richard Roberts, our Herts County Councillor has been given a list of the Highways issues and we are grateful to him for allocating part of his Locality Budget to help meet the cost of dealing some of these problems and reinforcing our concerns with Herts Highways.

However there are still many large potholes on our roads. Please report them! The best way to do this is through the Herts Highways website under “fault reporting” or contact John to report them.

Following continued concerns by parishioners, the PC has supported the operation of the Drive Safe Scheme, which is run by Hertfordshire Police. Local resident Fraser Copp has worked with John Newman and both are 'lead volunteers' for this project. Three monitoring sessions have taken place on Birch Lane. No other roads can be used for this monitoring due to “visibility issues”.

23% of drivers exceeded 35mph and were reported to Hertfordshire Police.

Through John, the PC has contacted Dacorum Safety Partnership regarding the possible use of mobile speed safety signs – SIDs. John set up a working party of representatives from different parts of the village to investigate the practicalities of where a SID could be sited and explore possible avenues of funding. A Road Safety Fund Grant is available and we are pleased that Peter Wright of Herts Highways and Councillor Richard Roberts are supporting this grant application. You will hear about this shortly.

An “unsuitable for Heavy Goods Vehicles” sign was placed at the top crossroads.

Thank you John we appreciate your hard work in dealing with Highways issues.

- **For Planning**, This year there have been 14 planning applications. For every planning application that comes in Pam and Linda liaise with the appropriate Dacorum Planning Officers, sometimes meeting with them and then preparing background information to help the PC with their decision making process.

Dacorum has recently decided to move to 'paperless planning', which means we no longer receive paper copies of plans and have to view everything online. We have received grants to purchase a laptop and projector, which were used effectively for the first time at our last meeting.

Most planning applications are relatively uncomplicated, but some are complex, problematic and time consuming and in fact are on the agenda for every meeting through the year! This has necessitated 2 extraordinary meetings in July and November to discuss planning applications.

Most planning decisions are made by the Planning Officer, but if the Parish Council and Planning Department do not agree on the recommendation, these plans are discussed by Committee at Dacorum, called the Development Control Committee. The Parish Council always has a representative (usually Pam or me!) to speak at these committee meetings. The work involved in preparing for these is considerable, and I thank Pam and Linda to their work to prepare for these meetings. We would also like to thank our Dacorum Borough Councillors for their support with planning matters, and also those residents who have given their assistance to the Parish Council.

Pam also liaises with Dacorum on enforcement issues and appeals and attends planning seminars to keep up to date with new regulations.

We very much appreciate that the planning role is very complicated, with many changes happening. It is particularly time consuming and we thank you for all your diligence, expertise with a slide rule and hard work throughout the year. Thank you Pam.

- **For the Environment**, Jill organised the ever-popular annual Litter Blitz on 4<sup>th</sup> March to clear rubbish from the lanes into and around Flaunden. 28 people took part & wore the Flaunden PC high visibility jackets and collected 18 sacks of rubbish & 11 bags of recycling. Once again all of Chenies Hill was cleared, resulting in more rubbish being collected, including about 100 vodka bottles again!

Thank you Jill for organising this event. Thanks also to Dacorum's Clean Safe & Green Team for providing litter pickers, bags & gloves.

Although Colin, our Village Warden, does a brilliant job throughout the year, picking up rubbish from inside the Village gates, the litter blitz enables us to clear all the lanes leading into the village. Thank you Colin & everyone who joined the litter blitz this year.

Afterwards we were all provided with the now "traditional" & very welcome winter warmers at the Bricklayers Arms. A big thank you once again to Alvin Michaels and his staff.

Thank you also to Colin & the villagers who regularly pick up rubbish as they pass. Every one of you makes a difference.

Jill reports to Dacorum any problems with our network of footpaths & bridleways, such as broken kissing gates, overgrown greenery and blocked paths. She has taken villagers on guided nature walks round the churchyard and is a mine of information about the flora & fauna of the village. She protects rare flora such as Lady's Smock outside the Village Hall and these were particularly beautiful this year, as well as the early purple orchids and other wildflowers in the churchyard.

For the past few years we have been allocated a grant under the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme. The 2016 grant was used to resurface F11 (opposite 107 Flaunden), this work was done in July. This year's grant was used to improve the surface on F7 (going down towards Latimer) and place a new bench on F7 in the newly assigned Wildflower field. We have already seen many walkers enjoying the rest and views down towards Latimer from the new bench!

A plaque in memory of Bruce Boshier, our Footpath Warden was placed on the bench in Hogpits.

Dog fouling has been a big problem on some footpaths, particularly F1Hogpits to the church). Following complaints Linda arranged for official signage to be put all long this path.

Continuing thanks go to Clayton Rae, Dacorum's Countryside Officer, for his help and support.

Thank you Jill for your hard work, for sharing your knowledge about the environment with us and your diligence in organising hedge cutting, footpath clearing, gate and stile mending, fallen tree clearance, filling of potholes on Footpaths & Bridleways. We are all very grateful to you. Thank you.

**In addition to all of the above, we have also :**

- 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.
- We organised the annual Easter Egg Treasure Hunt. This year 50 children & 55 adults took part on Easter Saturday, 15th April, a lovely sunny day! Once again families came to the Hall, collected treasure hunt sheets and walked round Flaunden completing the treasure hunt sheets. Everyone then returned to Hall for refreshments and the children collected their chocolate eggs and enjoyed 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 in the kitchen for providing and serving the lovely refreshments. It was a happy, lively event.
- We continue to keep the Website up to date, don't forget you will find here dates of meetings and copies of minutes etc. We also continue to send out emails via the village noticeboard, if you are not included on the email list please contact our clerk.
- The Flaunden Flyer is now fourteen years old and has produced 55 issues. Continued congratulations to the Flyer team for providing all villagers & friends of the village with an even more superbly presented magazine. Thanks also to the advertisers, as their support means that the Flyer has never needed a Parish Council subsidy. Thank you Flyer Team, very well done.
- This year the Flyer Team organised for the millennium book to be reprinted and the Parish Council agreed to cover the cost of this. Now new residents to the village can be given a copy free of charge and other residents can purchase a copy for £10.
- Our own Village Warden, Colin Gurney, continues to deliver an excellent job keeping the Village looking good, by regularly 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! Thank you Colin we all really appreciate your efforts and support and are all so pleased you are willing to continue to be our village warden.

This year we have held our scheduled 10 meetings, and additionally 2 'extraordinary' meetings primarily to discuss planning issues. The Council has recently voted to reduce the number of regular meetings per year to 6, i.e. one every other month, but will hold additional meetings if urgent business arises which cannot wait for the next scheduled meeting. We have decided to move all of our meetings to the Church Room, with the exception of our Annual meeting, which will continue to be held here in the Village Hall. The reason for the change of venue is that we only get a small number of residents attending our regular meetings and it is easier for the Parish Council to discuss issues around the table in smaller room (and for anyone attending the meeting to hear what is being discussed!). We do want to hear from our residents and continue to welcome everyone to all of our meetings. If you have any issues you wish to bring to our attention, or would like us to discuss at our meetings, please do let us know before the meeting so that the issue can be put on the agenda.

I thank Herts County Councillor Richard Roberts & our 3 Dacorum Councillors, Gbola Adeleke, Adam Barnes and Stewart Riddick who have been an enormous support particularly with the difficult planning issues we have faced this year.

I also thank all the willing helpers for continuing to provide and serve the refreshments at our meetings. It would be good to continue this in the church room.

I would like to thank Keith Robinson for joining our team of Parish Councillors last May. Keith's legal expertise has been of great benefit to the council over this last year and we are delighted that he has decided to continue to work with the Parish Council by taking on the role of Clerk. Thank you to Keith for all of your work as a Parish Councillor and I look forward to continuing to work with you.

I give Linda and Jack, the PC's Officers, great thanks and much appreciation for all their hard work during the year behind and in front of the scenes. They keep us councillors informed, directed, legal and many other things too. We are a great team.

Thank you to all of the Parish Council for the care and time you have taken to support the people of Flaunden. Thank you team.

As mentioned Linda is stepping down as Clerk and Keith is taking on this role we have, therefore, advertised for a new member of the Parish Council and will be appointing a new member of the Council at our July meeting.

Flaunden is lucky to have so many talented, kind, caring people who give their time willingly for the benefit of us all, including Libby Newman, the worthy recipient of the Peter Scribens silver salver last year for her outstanding contribution in supporting the welfare of residents 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.

Thank you.