

Firstly, I want to thank my fellow Councillors for their support and hard work.

Also we have a new Clerk, Mary, without whom we would have achieved only a fraction of what we have this last year.

- Last Summer, Mary jumped straight into the deep-end of the murky parochial pond
- She has been 100% dependable, and combines boundless energy with calm, wisdom and wit. I for one have really appreciated her quiet counsel and supportive ear.
- And we've given her role a well overdue pay-rise to bring her wages into line with current guidelines.

We have been tightening up procedures and we're trying to make what we do more professional and accountable.

- For too many years, I feel the Parish Council has been perceived by many parishioners as a monthly gossip session where much has been promised but little gets done.
- We've been accused of everything from impropriety to incompetence. So how have we started to address this?

Procedurally, we've adopted the Local Government Model of Conduct which requires us to uphold principles such as honesty, integrity and accountability.

We've had to tighten up on issues such as declaring personal interests before each meeting and we are now bound by clear rules which prevent us from abusing our positions.

My experience as a Councillor has shown me that most past accusations of wrongdoing have been misplaced, but I feel **this** exercise has been a useful one in making us all focus on why we're here and reminding us of the trust that is placed in us.

I think we're tackling things more **quickly** and **efficiently** and paying more attention to tracking progress and finishing jobs so they don't drift on endlessly.

We have established a **finance committee**, which met for the first time last week, whose job it will be to help the Clerk create a system that will help us plan our budget more effectively, while allowing for a contingency in case of unforeseen issues.

As part of this, we will also undertake a regular “risk assessment”, meaning we’re shining a regular spotlight on our duty of care and ensuring we have adequate insurance cover etc.

We have also recognised the need to **communicate** more **directly** with the Parish:

- We have created a new website with monthly minutes, contact details and links to local Government services.
- Also, seasonal newsletters – 2 of them so far – delivered to everyone’s door, have been very well received, judging from the feedback we’ve been getting.

Some of the issues we’ve been tackling this past 12 months:

- **Mill Lane** and its conversion to “Restricted Byway” status. We were approached by many people with concerns and we took the issue straight to Bucks CC Rights of Way committee.

After collecting 47 evidence forms – and thanks to everyone who contributed to these – we now have a strong case for reinstating full vehicular access. This challenge is a first for The Bucks Rights of Way committee and they will meet again in the Autumn to make a decision on this.
- We met with **allotment holders** to address their concerns about the general state of the allotments. After some research, we discovered our arrangements with them were woefully inadequate, relying on “Gentlemen’s Agreements” going back years. We have established a new tenancy agreement and we are now in the process of spending money to improve the Allotments. We have also instigated an Allotment Society to address any future issues.
- We’ve installed a **dog poo bin** at the Rec to address a common complaint and are paying for it to be emptied weekly (twice weekly in the Summer.) So far it looks like it has been effective in reducing the problem and we’ll continue to monitor it.
- We have done a lot of work on the proposal for **floodlights** at the Rec, including investigating the grants available to us. It quickly became clear to us that this was of concern to many people in the Parish and a consultation evening last month with evidence for and against was very well attended by people from all over the Parish.
- We have committed to the purchase of a pair of Vehicle Activated Signs at either end of Twyford. There is overwhelming evidence that these are the most effective way we can encourage drivers to check their speed and to drive appropriately through Twyford. But first we need to prove that we have an **actual** speed problem rather than a **perceived** one. So expect to see rubber strips on Bicester and Portway Road to gather the data sometime soon.

Finally, I'd like to thank some key people on behalf of the Parish Council for their support and hard work this past year:

- Bill Harbour for his continuing help mowing and looking after the bottlebanks, amongst many other things.
- Alan Riley for his maintenance work.
- Will Abbott for his advice on land registry issues
- Matthew Tutt for his help with the trees in the Rec
- Julia Cooke for her help catering for us all at Raymond's leaving do.
- Pete Hubbard for his help down at the Rec
- Annie Thorne for her help in supporting Mary in her new role.
- Martin Whittam for his financial advice and support.
- Steven Hodges for his generosity and support in all sorts of areas.
- TDI for hosting our Skatepark last month, which proved a huge hit with many of Twyford's kids – we hope it's an event that will continue and we look forward to giving it our continuing support.
