

Quainton Parish Council Chair's Annual Report 2018

Last year, in this annual slot, I said, "The village is about to be invaded by Thames Water as they renew mains piping in much of the village. Their preparation and planning augur well for the work not causing as much disruption as it might, fingers crossed." Such was my misplaced faith you will understand why I ought, in future, to desist from forecasting.

I hope, however, that I am not totally deceived if I claim that the majority of residents appreciate the work the Parish Council does on their behalf. It certainly makes our task much easier and more rewarding when we see that support in practical actions. In 2017 there was tangible evidence of that when an Inspector arrived in Aylesbury to hear developers submit their appeal in an effort to build an estate of houses along a major entrance to the village. Residents made their opposition to such a development by way of written, spoken and physical presence and, to be fair to AVDC they too did an excellent job in defeating those who wished to see their financial desires and economic clout win the day. Thankfully the Inspector saw sense and refused the appeal.

A central strongpoint in seeing off these potential desecrators was The Quainton Neighbourhood Development Plan. Those people who worked so hard and expertly to draw up this document deserve our unstinting praise. Their work certainly stood up well in defending Quainton. Thank you.

This, we all acknowledge, will not be the only occasion on which it will be necessary to stand against those wishing to develop any area they choose, without giving any thought of impact on everyone else in the community. We are not opposed to development; we recognise it must come, but it has to be in places which meet the requirements so carefully expounded in the aforementioned NDP. Thus The Strand is only a forerunner of other battles which lie ahead when due regard is not paid to community opinion and resolve.

Evidence of these future problems may be viewed on every road within the village, where landowners and/or developers seek to exploit their land, for financial gain, without regard to the effects on our community or landscape. 32 applications for development have been received this year. 10 remain to be

resolved, half of which concern properties outside the accepted settlement boundary.

Our local planning authority, AVDC, has its own back against the wall as planning applications continue to flood in, many pushed by central government. Enforcement is, in normal times, a distinct problem. Recognising this there are those who break the law, lying and deceiving with impunity, causing extra work for us all. At least we now have a Vale of Aylesbury Plan awaiting government approval. This, if accepted, will strengthen our own NDP.

One of our greatest strengths in this battle to ensure justice succeeds was our late District Councillor, Kevin Hewson. Kevin was at the forefront of seeking information, pressing for action and ensuring that local voices were heard. Obviously his decease was a tremendous blow to his family but also, indisputably, a severe blow to our community. Whoever is elected in Kevin's place come May will need, and deserve, our understanding and support.

Since the Secretary of State is minded to destroy AVDC and establish the County Council as the single administrative tier for present district and county services the new District Councillor could have a shortened period of stewardship. It is not the option we hoped for since we believe the present Vale of Aylesbury is not, and will not, be valued as highly by a council dominated numerically by those elected to represent the interests of the majority of its electorate, living, as they do, outside our area. Proof of this can already be seen in the positioning of the county's one incinerator up here in the far north and the tremendous explosion in housing development foisted on Aylesbury.

To this will soon be added the Oxford-Cambridge road improvements to be accompanied by the development of a new city, very possibly somewhere in our vicinity since one of the proposed sites would bring the city boundary right up to Lee Bridge, by the Fenemores' farm.

We are seeing an increase in preparations for HS2's incursion. Thames Water has already provided a little taste of how life will be hampered by lengthy road closures and the use of unsuitable country lanes by extensive traffic, including heavy goods vehicles. We presently suffer greatly from blocked drains and pot holes galore, which increase faster than they can be repaired. Diversion signs

abound, local knowledge is not sought and, if given, frequently discounted, so you can never be sure which route to follow and how long it may take to reach the next village, let alone Aylesbury or Bicester. BT, HS2, Thames Water, Bucks County Council are all pitching in their requests for road closures, yet when we seek broadband improvements or an extension to our present post office facilities we come up against a wall of excuses, leading to frustration and a sense of helplessness.

And, where in all this gloom are the positives? Are there any? Well, of course there are. In fact several of them are sitting in this room and there are many more outside. Think of those volunteers who keep our verges litter free, those who renew our road signs and entrance gates, the seat repairers, those who upkeep our property such as out street furniture, playground equipment, gates and footpaths, those who, spotting a blocked drain or gully, go and clear it, the groups such as our wonderful bonfire committee who also take care of beacons celebrations, Christmas tree and lights, the sports facility providers, the windmill and monument restorers, all who organise societies and activities. These are the ones who make our village such a wonderful place to live and grow in. Thank you all.

We need also to be mindful of those who contributed, financially or timewise, to our defibrillator now available to residents. We should soon see the Saye and Sele Hall refurbished and two new grit bins sited at appropriate points in the village. We thank those who attend meetings on our behalf, on such issues as planning, highways, incinerator, police, local councils' forum, those who oversee our Green, not an easy ride I assure you, and those who look after our sports facilities.

Above all I wish to pay tribute to our Clerk. The term 'clerk' gives absolutely no indication of the variety of talents required or the width of tasks to be performed. At one moment Brian can be akin to a United Nations peacemaker, a problem solver, a financier, a legal and planning expert, a data protection specialist, an agony aunt, a researcher and always a fount of information, a calming influence and rational adviser. Thanks to his skills and guidance we are well on the way to achieving Quality Council status. We are just so lucky.

I also thank my fellow councillors for their work, their patience, the time they willingly give, and the example they set. May you long continue in your roles and be deservedly appreciated. And, finally, thank you to those residents present tonight. Please, whether or not you attend P C meetings, continue to keep us on our toes and to bring forward your opinions and ideas, so that we are truly able to represent accurately the wishes of our lovely community.