

Buckden Parish Council
Annual Parish Assembly 9th June 2020

Chairman's Update

Overall this has been a very productive and successful year for the council despite the obvious challenge of COVID 19 towards the end of the period. This report sets out the major achievements and some of the challenges faced by the council.

Planning

The Neighbourhood Plan has been completed and will be submitted for inspection in June. This includes significant feedback from residents.

The Community Action Plan is complete and details all the actions and projects planned for the village in the coming years.

The Council have continued to work with HDC and Highways to ensure that inappropriate development is not approved in the village, in particular to ensure that additional traffic is not generated. At the time of writing proposed developments at Silver Street and Mill Road have been 'on hold' for many months due to concerns about increased traffic, particularly at the roundabout.

An ongoing dialogue has been established with Bloor Homes to manage the frequent issues with the Lucks Lane Development.

A Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan has been produced, again with significant input from residents. This sets out future plans for a much more extensive footpath and cycling network. Funding is being sought for implementation.

Fortnightly meetings have been held to review planning applications in the village.

A Welcome brochure aimed at new residents in the village has been produced.

Climate Change

A new climate change advisory group was established.

A hugely successful Climate Change workshop was held in January with over 300 attendees.

Infrastructure Improvements

The Round-about-Buckden Walk was developed and opened in June 2019.

Funding for a zebra crossing outside of the school was obtained and this was installed in Autumn 2019.

Funding for traffic calming in Perry Road was obtained and is due to be installed soon. Installation has been delayed by COVID.

Funding for traffic calming on Mill Road has been sought and the outcome is awaited.

Funding has been achieved for improvements, including a path across the village green.

The paths in the Church yard have been re-laid to a very high standard.

There have been several improvements at the cemetery, including new railings and repaired paths.

A new notice board has been installed at the Allotments.

New Christmas Lights were purchased and installed.

Yellow lines were re painted outside Annie Furbanks.

The playground at the Village Hall has been repaired following vandalism.

Several 'clean up' initiatives have been undertaken including cutting back vegetation on corner of A1 and Silver Street to improve visibility and safety.

Re-introduction of Speed watch group, unfortunately this has not been able to continue because of the COVID19 lockdown.

Operational

A new Parish web site has been introduced with much improved functionality.

Financial planning and reporting systems have been updated.

Criteria have been developed to help the Council prioritise and assess the deliverability of projects which may be funded using the Community Infrastructure Levy (for Lucks Lane).

Financial Regulations have been updated to ensure we can manage more effectively using on-line banking.

Management of the Parish Council's Reserves have been reviewed, including principles for investment, to help ensure a robust and transparent system to manage increasing costs that are being shifted from County & District Councils to the Parish

Donations to the Village Hall Trust (to support playing fields maintenance) and to the Scouts were agreed in line with a new Donations and Grants Policy.

Contractors were appointed to cut larger grass areas within the village to reduce costs and create capacity for other maintenance tasks

Many of the council's policies and procedures were reviewed and updated.

Impact of COVID

The council very quickly implemented policy and procedures to ensure the continuation of council business including moving to electronic (Zoom) meetings and has continued to operate effectively.

The handymen have continued to maintain services despite some absence and operational challenges.

A volunteer group was established in co ordination with St Mary's and Friends Indeed to support vulnerable individuals in the village.

Continuing challenges

Keeping footpaths accessible and cleared

Maintenance of pavements and road markings

The continuing pressure from District and County Councils to take on further responsibilities