

KING'S SUTTON PARISH COUNCIL - ANNUAL PARISH MEETING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

I was elected chairman of the parish council in August 2014 following the unexpected resignation of Geoffrey Searle who moved from the village for family reasons.

Geoffrey was a very effective chairman who oversaw the restructuring of the council which took effect last year. It was primarily his idea that we moved from the previous structure of permanent committees to our present structure which gives individual councillors specific roles and responsibilities. We now have councillors for footway lighting, the cemetery, the recreation ground, communications and traffic calming – but we still operate two standing committees one for Planning and one for Finance, Governance and Policy (FG & P).

Parish councils are only required by statute to meet three times a year in addition to the annual parish meeting. However throughout the past year we have continued to meet on the first Thursday evening of each month (at 7.30 pm in the Millennium Memorial Hall) with the Planning Committee meeting immediately before. The FG and P committee has met six times during the year.

All council and committee meetings are open to the public with agendas published on the council noticeboards and website.

The full council comprises 15 councillors, but currently has only 11 members.

In addition to councillors, the council has a Rights of Way Warden who looks after the parish footpaths, ably undertaken for a number of years by Dave Hall, and also a Tree Warden - which until his recent untimely death, was undertaken by Alan Essex who also served as a councillor for sixteen years.

Councillors are supported by the parish clerk whose working hours are currently under review in response to an ever increasing workload. As well as producing all the papers for meetings, the clerk serves the council as its Responsible Finance Officer, and once again she has ensured that the council's finances are properly budgeted and audited and that we have continued to maintain healthy reserves and not had to increase our council tax precept. I wish to place on record my personal thanks to her for her wise counsel, expertise and commitment throughout the year.

The councillors for the roles referred to above will give more detailed reports on their own responsibilities, but as an overview, amongst other issues councillors have been involved with –

- regular consultations with the local planning authority regarding building developments in the parish
- ongoing consultations with new housing developers regarding footway lighting, notifications to residents, etc
- ongoing consultations regarding the proposed flood alleviation scheme for Wales Street
- ongoing consultations regarding the possible extension of the railway station car park

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- the installation of new play area equipment on the Rec (which will shortly be officially opened)
- pursuing the introduction of new traffic calming measures on the roads into the village (which should be actioned in the coming year)
- examining the feasibility of extending the cemetery
- subsidising the weekly Thursday bus for village shoppers to and from Banbury
- the appointment of a local professional contractor to manage the parish council website
- collating and analysing the results of the "The Way Ahead" village survey
- organising a village litter pick in September

It is hoped that this year's parish council election will secure the full number of parish councillors for the next four years.

Bob Burrell

Chairman – King's Sutton Parish Council