

2015/16 Chairman's Report.

Let me start by saying that the last 12 months have been a difficult period for Walton Parish Council. We've continued to see the threat of housing developments on Thorp Arch Trading Estate and now the prison land following the transfer of its ownership to the Homes and Communities Agency. Either development will threaten the very heart of village life with the potential for a considerable increase in traffic movements both during and after the building work completes.

At the same time we've struggled to maintain a full body of councillors and find a replacement clerk; something that has troubled me given the duties that a clerk undertakes and the work that has fallen on several councillors to complete as a result. The primary role of the clerk is to ensure the efficient running of council matters and to keep the councillors on the right side of the legal system. This is a role that carries accountability with it which is why the parish council continues to pay the highest salary possible for the work to be done; alas this has not drawn in candidates and subsequently Councillor Forret stepped down at the start of this year to undertake the role of Clerk – I'm sure once she is up to speed she will do an admirable job in this role.

However it's not all been bad news and in the latter part of the year, we were successful in restarting the Neighbourhood Planning Committee and my thanks go to every member of this team as we are now beginning to see real progress in the ongoing development of the Neighbourhood Plan which for too long has sat in the shadow of the TATE development. Whilst the TATE application for 2000 houses and a relief road was withdrawn, we now face the prospect of a smaller development and all of the associated challenges around traffic movements and sustainability – again without the active involvement of the Neighbourhood Planning Committee, we will struggle to ensure that we are representing the views of the village and therefore my thanks go to every member of this group once again for their continued involvement.

Two projects that I would have dearly liked to see progress were the cycle track and playground developments which had both stalled until Stephen Sharp and his colleagues got involved as part of the NPC initiative. Whilst progress has been slow, both of these projects are now beginning to take shape and I thank those individuals involved for their efforts and continued enthusiasm for driving things forward.

It will not go unnoticed by several of you that I am standing down as chairman of the council; having sat for 12 years on the council I feel that the time is right for more enthusiastic members of the community to play a part. It's unfortunate that my work takes me out of the area for much of the week and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future and therefore I have also tendered my resignation as a councillor on the premise that should the council find it's unable to fill the role, then I will re-consider my position and continue as a councillor. I dearly hope that somebody will step up that has more time than I have to do the

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role and provide the positive contribution to the community that I have struggled to maintain and I look forward to hearing that this has happened.

On a final note I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their efforts over the past year and would especially like to extend my thanks and gratitude to David Taylor for taking on the councils book-keeping duties. This concludes the Chairman's Report and I wish you all the best for the coming year.

Kind Regards

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