

Walford Parish Council

Chairman's Report 2010 – 2011

The year began with Councillor Frank Myers, Chairman; Councillor Phillip Heath, Vice Chairman; and Councillors Sandra Cole, Simeon Cole, Derek Allen, Michael Downey, Eric Drummond, Heather Evans, Luke Freeman, Geoffrey Symonds, Marc Thomas, Bridget Vine and Alan Whitlock making up the full complement of thirteen Councillors on the Parish. There have been no changes during the year.

We have met monthly, with the exception of August and we have had many additional meetings in between as we seek to progress the interests of the Parish.

Last year I reported that the by-election caused by the resignation of George Jones cost in excess of £2000. I am pleased to report that, by vigorous representation, we have managed to have this sum of money reduced to just under £1100. Nevertheless it still represents a significant proportion of our annual precept.

The financial performance of the Council has been one of modest activity, within our financial expectations. The Council has healthy reserves which are in place to enable us to progress some of the important projects as they unfold.

Last year was a year of change; this has been one of increasing stability. We commenced in April without a Parish Clerk and eventually we were able to fill this position in May when Catherine Murray joined us. Catherine has proved to be a very capable lady who has worked hard on the Council's behalf. She has enthusiastically engaged in training so that she can become the qualified clerk which we are required to have to achieve our ambitions. She has also proved to have significant diplomatic skills when faced with overzealous representations from time to time. She is a pleasure to work with.

The changes, as expected, set back our plans to become a Quality Council, but our ambition remains. Another one of the milestones was achieved recently when Catherine published our newsletter. I hope you will agree that it was an impressive piece of work, with some informative contributions from your Councillors.

I should also thank our previous Clerk, Jackie Perry, who has been a capable and willing help to Catherine since she has taken up the reins. In this context I

would like to thank Councillor Bridget Vine who has willingly stepped in to assist Catherine in producing notes of meetings when needed. I know that Catherine is very grateful to them both.

During the year our long term activities have continued. The Parish Plan is being updated by a sub-committee led by Councillor Thomas and the cycle route project has been, once again, energetically pursued by Councillor Heath. As I said last year, these are both long term projects requiring much determination and patience. In confident expectation, we thank Marc and Phillip for their continuing efforts.

Councillor Downey has once again continued to work as our Footpaths Officer and Councillor Freeman has continued to coordinate Lengthsman activities, all of which have been energetically pursued to the benefit of the Parish. Councillor Vine has coordinated our relationship with HALC and the AONB activities, we should thank them all for their efforts on behalf of the Parish.

As ever our involvement in Planning Applications has created much activity and this has been dealt with entirely by full Council. In the year we have processed some of the more challenging issues associated with some of the social and economic changes going on around us. Having two energetic and innovative farming businesses in our area continues to bring its challenges as do burgeoning leisure opportunities. These are what make Walford the energetic village that it is, in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

We continue to strive to create the appropriate balance which change brings. We have continued our policy of Public meetings for major planning matters and tried to engage with all interested parties. Although we cannot please all of the people all of the time, we have done our best and will continue to do so.

During the year the other routine activities have continued. Dog fouling problems, additional road signs, speed limits and managing the interface between rural pursuits and modern traffic will always bring their challenges. We have done our best to manage them all, within the scope of our responsibilities, in the interests of the Parish.

The Kerne Bridge canoe launch scheme came to the fore during the year and, as is mentioned in the newsletter, will, during the next few months, become a significant challenge or opportunity, depending upon your point of view.

The new approach to 'Localism' presented by the Coalition Government will also bring its challenges and opportunities as we go forward into the next Council.

Pot holes have, once again, presented an extra challenge after another extremely hard winter but I think we should acknowledge the efforts of Herefordshire Council, ably assisted by Amey, in trying to get on top of the problem since then. Let's hope we can see more than our share, in the next few months, of the £2.4 million extra monies recently secured by Herefordshire Council from the Government.

As you will hear from our guest speakers shortly, we have continued to facilitate the Red Cross Village Warden Scheme and hope that this will come to fruition soon.

We have made progress in our commitment to improve our communications. Our renewed website has come to fruition and builds upon previous work. We welcome ideas for its improvement and actively encourage people to make contributions and introduce worthwhile links which will benefit our parishioners.

All in all it has been a somewhat routine year but one in which we have moved forward steadily with some of our longer term ambitions.

We now move into new elections on May 5th. Councillors Michael Downey, Geoff Symonds, Bridget Vine and Alan Whitlock have decided not to put their names forward and we must take this opportunity to thank them all for their contribution over many years and particularly the last four.

The introduction of new thinking into the Council can do nothing but benefit the people of Walford and I hope that all the new councillors, whoever they are, will take up their positions in May with vigour and the ambition to achieve. I know colleagues agree with me when I say that there is nothing more frustrating or unreasonable than people who seek office and then attend meetings infrequently and play little part in proceedings between one election and the next.

I have been privileged to be your Chairman for the past three and a half years and I thank you for the trust you have placed in me.

Frank Myers MBE

13th April 2011