



UPWOOD AND THE RAVELEYS PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

Report from the Chairman

Robin Howe

Chairman, Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council

In last year's annual report I outlined the four main priorities the parish council is addressing and these remain in place until further notice.

The first priority is the appearance of the parish, notably the grassed areas and hedgerows. We want these areas to be groomed and attractive to visitors and residents and have invested a great deal of time in selecting a new contractor to undertake this work. The first two cuts have been disappointing in some areas and we will soon hold a meeting with the management of BEAM to resolve this. As part of our plan is to make the parish more attractive we have prepared the ground for planting four beds of wildflowers on both sides of Huntington Road. Seed has been planted and should be flowering from July onwards. We would like feedback from residents about this initiative, as we are of course spending taxpayer money to carry out this work. Councillor Edwards is responsible for preparing the ground for the planting and a resident Paul Charman, a keen and knowledgeable gardener, is advising on the best flower collection to attract bees and other insects. Cllr Edwards also organised the recent litter pick across the parish which yielded 20 sacks of litter. The event was attended by five councillors and 10 residents.

The second is road safety and speed control which I dealt with in earlier reports. One in five motorists exceed the speed limit and a small percentage exceed 70 mph in the 40 mph limit. One motorcyclist routinely exceeds 100 mph leaving and entering the village. Reducing speed limits is clearly an important step but enforcement is much more important and we need the support of the police, the police and crime commissioner and our local MP to support investment in enforcement systems. This should include regular radar checks by the police but permanent monitoring devices, such as radio cameras and average speed cameras, represent the most effective deterrent. Competition for investment in these technologies is fierce in the



county and we shall have to fight very hard if we are to succeed.

Housing developments, under the portfolio of Cllr Burgess, have been limited in the parish during the last year, compared to those taking place in Bury and Ramsey. A number of executive homes are being built in Great Raveley on two sites, while HDC has granted planning permission for a single home on the land between Fisherman's Close and 71 & 77 High Street. A resident consortium has bought the seven acre field behind Ailwyn House known as The Warren and have placed a no-building covenant upon it thereby protecting it permanently from unwanted development.

Ramsey and Bury have had 1600 new homes approved, or are in the HDC Local Plan (a 50% increase) without any significant changes to transport systems, education or health facilities. An alliance of the three parishes; Ramsey, Upwood and Bury (RUB) is supporting a campaign to have speed limits reduced and more investment in road and infrastructure improvements. The parish now has four speed indicator devices located on the four roads in and out of the parish and these collect valuable speed data to be used when campaigning for speed limit reductions. Cllr Bonnett-Kolakowska has led the campaign for speed reduction to 30 mph along Huntingdon Road and the RUB Alliance will support the campaign to extend the 30-mph limit past the school and Fairmead to link with the 30-mph limit in Bury.

The third is the health and safety of children. Cllr Mashford continues to seek grant funding to modernise Bentley Close play area and has organised summer sports events with HDC. We are lobbying Evera Homes to ensure that Fairmead children have access to new play facilities connected to the airfield development. Similarly we are pressing the developer of the new homes planned for Farm Close to make provision for play areas given the loss of large areas of green space.

The fourth is improved communication between the parish council and residents. We made a start with this, with the help of Cllr Mashford, by publishing full colour inserts in a new design format for the parish newsletter. COVID-19 had a lesser impact on parish activities in the last year compared with earlier years and meetings were all held in the Village Hall, a welcome resumption of normal service. There have been a number of changes to personnel in the last few months including Nick Maddocks who retired in March, having represented Fairmead estate and has done sterling work with the children's playground in the last couple of years. Andrew Perkins decided not to stand for election in May and steps down after almost 20 years in office. Andrew has fulfilled many roles in his time, most recently as tree officer and with responsibility for grounds maintenance; his hard work, local knowledge and quirky humour will be missed by us all. His huge personality and experience will be hard to replace.

We also welcomed Michael Tew to the council during the year. He has enormous experience in local government as a current assembly member of the National Association of Local Councils and is a former county councillor. Michael resides in Bury and previously chaired Bury parish council and will act as an important link with our neighbouring parish when it comes to speed control and road infrastructure strategies. David Awit, whose family are relative newcomers to the parish, joined us last September and took responsibility for the new ground maintenance contract which led to the selection of BEAM as our contractor for the next three years. We are pleased to learn that Fairmead resident James Milner will join the council following the recent local election. James is a serving policeman and an active member of the cricket club and will add his considerable experience to the council.

A final mention must be given to the Clerk, Carol Bilverstone. Carol cared for her husband Andrew throughout a debilitating illness, until he tragically passed away at the end of December. In spite of the enormous pressure on her time and emotions Carol continued her role as Clerk without interruption and ensured that the highest standards expected of a Quality Gold Award council were maintained throughout. She deserves our utmost sympathy and thanks.

Additional notices

Revisiting the Community-Led Plan

Our community has changed considerably since the first plan was first developed in 2015. Cllr Tew will be spearheading the plan update; if you are keen to be involved too, he'd love to hear from you at mike.tew@upwood.org.

How does it work?

The whole community is invited to provide their opinion on a range of questions, the answers of which are used to develop an action plan to guide local activity in a way that delivers on what you want from your community.

To kick off the project, Cllr Tew would like to hear your thoughts on the questions below:

- What do you like about living here?
- What do you dislike?
- How could our parish be improved?

Please drop your answers into the box in the book exchange, or online at:
<https://forms.gle/FfaGbYKiNLxdRDgo6>

Bentley Close RoSPA Inspection

Following our RoSPA inspection, we will be undertaking some remedial work on the play area as a few cracks have appeared in some of the play towers. The parish council is also in the process of trying to remove several incidences of offensive graffiti from the play area, as well as monitoring some areas that appear to have been subject to arson.

We are incredibly lucky to have the play area in the village, and are hugely thankful to the many volunteers who help maintain the facilities – making it even more saddening that members of our community feel it is acceptable to vandalise it in this way.

Financial Report

Carol Bilverstone

Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer

In 2021/2022 the parish council worked with a budget of £39,627.80, £26,000 of which was raised through the precept. At the end

of the year receipts totalled £32,132.35 and payments £37,770.82. The balance carried forward on 31 March 2022 was £42,976.64 (a decrease of £5,640.47 on the previous year).

Although the bank balance remains healthy, only £25,516 is held as a general reserve. £6,000 is reserved for a future cemetery extension and £9,000 is reserved for repair/replacement of play equipment. Also included in the year end bank balance is the remaining £2,463 Community Infrastructure Levy. This may only be spent on infrastructure and this will be carried forward into the next financial year. The invoice for the Local Highway Improvement Initiative 2019/2020 for traffic calming in Great Raveley amounting to £6,619.00 was received and paid during 2021/2022. The parish council has made a conscious decision to utilise some of its reserves rather than to make significant increases to the precept (and therefore council tax). Comparing the forecasted budget with actual expenditure in 2021/2022 there are two notable variances:

- Active Lives children's activities during the summer of 2021 costing £490.02. This was an unbudgeted expense as the parish council had hoped to secure sponsorship.
- The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in savings of £130 for travel.
- Other notable expenses and achievements in 2020/2021 include:
 - Continued financial support to the parish newsletter (including a dedicated parish council insert) and the village hall
 - Continued support for continued professional development for the clerk and for councillors

Two donations were gratefully received during 2021/2022: one, an anonymous donation of £300 from a resident was made to support the re-wilding of highway verges and the parish eagerly awaits some colourful displays throughout the summer months. The second donation of £1146.16 from Upwood and the Raveleys History Group reflects the results of a community fundraising project to cover the cost of a commemorative bench "to the Upwood walkers who enjoyed some freedom during the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020/2021". The project was so successful that enough money was raised to purchase a second bench and this will "celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II". £108.52 remains unspent and the parish council awaits instructions from the residents' group regarding the purchase of a commemorative tree or similar enduring legacy.

The parish council remains fully compliant in all areas of governance and financial management. In April 2022, the parish council adopted a new "Code of Conduct" in line with Huntingdonshire District Council. All policies and procedures are reviewed and readopted at the Annual General Parish Council Meeting in May. The parish council prides itself on its transparency and a significant amount of information relating to the business of the parish council is readily available on the parish website. The Facebook page provides an additional communication channel. The annual internal audit carried out in 2021 was extremely positive and despite significant effort the internal auditor failed to find any areas of the parish council's financial administration or governance in need of attention. I expect this to remain the case for the forthcoming audit in May 2022. In conclusion, the parish council continues to uphold the standards required to qualify for "Local Council Award Scheme's Quality Gold Award". This parish council is one of three councils in Cambridgeshire to have achieved this award and one of only 53 in England and Wales. The parish council should consider re-applying after the elections and expiry of the award in November 2022.