

Harrold Parish Council Chairman's End-Of-Year Statement 2023/24

"As is customary for the May annual meetings, I'd like to provide a roundup of the last 12 months and highlight some of the work carried out by the parish council.

Firstly, I wish to note some thanks to some people who have contributed to village life.

I particularly wish to thank David Brough, our clerk. His presentation of our accounts is superb and the ongoing updates throughout the year allow us to see clearly where we stand with our allocation of funds. David also gives us sage advice. Borough Councillor Alison Foster says he is one of the best parish clerks she has ever known. David goes beyond his paid duties. For example, he undertakes to give us due warning of possible floods. Thank you also to Alison for her constant care and attention.

Although not run by the Parish Council, we should thank Chris Chaplin and his committee in their stewardship of the Harrold Centre – to its refurbishment the PC contributed. There are many organisations who add to our village life and the PC endeavours to support them, including our various sports clubs. I think we can also note the long hours and dedication of our Co-op. I must thank my fellow Parish Councillors for their dedication to our work. I can assure you they do more than just turn up to meetings. Do keep up with what we do by following our agendas and keep us apprised of any needs you can see. We also note the passing of John Tusting who remained a friend and benefactor of the village throughout his life. We send our condolences to his family.

We are all fortunate to have a number of attractive green spaces in the village. Many of these are owned and maintained by the parish council: The Green, the Lower Green (aka The Mill), Saxon House End, and Harewelle Way play area. We aim to keep the areas looking nice but also to keep them safe; one of the most important issues is to keep on top of the tree maintenance as we have a number of older trees requiring inspection and maintenance. We also operate and maintain the cemetery in Harrold, which remains open for burials and has a wall of remembrance for memorial plaques. Our part-time Street Ranger keeps key areas in the village tidy and maintains the brook, which silts up and overgrows quickly if left. Since the borough council reduced their bin collections to fortnightly a few years ago, we've had to perform our own additional emptying of the High Street bins. To look at this more positively, these are signs of a busy and thriving village that we try to keep looking at its best.

The parish council budgets each year for grant funding for local groups. In September, the Harrold Playing Field Association held an End Of Summer Bash with financial support from the council; a successful and well-attended event. We understand there will be another event this year. We also granted £3,000 to Harrold Preschool towards building an enclosed sandpit and making the existing outdoor play area more weatherproof, £2,500 to the Harrold Centre for ongoing costs, and £270 to the United Reformed Church to cover the cost of their graveyard maintenance.

The cast iron and wooden benches around the village were refurbished in June; it was very satisfying to see them gleaming and given a new lease of life. In September we held a public defibrillator training course run by East Anglian Air Ambulance. The course had a strong turnout and received good feedback. Minor works were carried out on the skate ramps at the country park to ensure they remain in good condition. The parish council has a new .gov website where you can find updates and useful documents like our agendas and minutes.

The parish council is also a consultee in the borough council's planning process and we've reviewed and commented on a number of domestic planning applications. On a larger scale, Brampton Valley Homes have submitted planning applications for the proposed development of 17 dwellings at the

site at Odell Road. The first was withdrawn and the second is still being considered by the borough council planning department at time of writing. The site is located just to the north west of the junction at Little Odell and forms part of the Harrold Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP): adopted by residents through a referendum process in November 2021. The site is registered with an Odell address but sits within the boundary of the parish of Harrold and is outlined for 11 market and 6 affordable units. In total, Harrold was directed by the borough council to accept a minimum of 25 dwellings in the parish and the choice of the site on Odell Road was chosen through various public consultations. Whilst the council supports development on this site through its inclusion in the NDP, this is not to be at the expense of safety, and a key request from the parish council is that the junction into the development is designed appropriately. We also commented on the design and layout of the dwellings, flood risk mitigation, affordable housing providers, and tree/hedge preservation.

The coming year is shaping up to be just as busy as the last.”

Robert Tickle Chairman - Harrold Parish Council