

May 2019 represented the end of a four-year term of office for the councillors. There was no election for Parish Councillors on 2nd May as we had fewer applicants than positions (7 out of 13). The councillors remaining for the next four-year term of office are Robert Tickle (Chairman), David Brough (Vice Chair), David Mercer, Richard Barrett, Bob Muller, Jayne Peverell and Pat Pedersen. Sebastian Reger and John Calver are expected to be coopted back on to the council. Robbin Brough remained as clerk for her fourth year. This past year we were sorry to say goodbye to councillors Bob Page, Lucie Hoad, Lindsay Duggan and Gary Lloyd and we thank them for their hard work.

The end of the four years represents an opportune time to look back (in summary!) and see what has been achieved by the Parish Council and what we're currently working on. Over this period we have made a tactical effort to bring down the level of cash reserves through a process of expediting projects and focusing on areas of the village that had previously been overlooked. These reserves had built up from "Section 106" payments from the developers of Roman Paddock and Harewelle Way.

Strategy 1: Distribution of funding to local voluntary groups

One of the council's strategies is to distribute more funding to local voluntary groups through Section 137 Grants. These benefit parishioners by ensuring that voluntary organisations and services are able to keep functioning and to assist those that are newly formed. Over the four years we issued grants totaling over £31k, including to the following groups: The Friends of Harrold Odell Country Park to construct the pond-dipping platform for school groups; Harrold Snooker Club (based at the Harrold Centre) for new equipment and refurbishment of the snooker room; The Bridge magazine - an essential communication tool for the council; United Reformed Church for a new cooker, to support their community group activities; Bridgman Bowls club for roof renovations; Harrold Good Neighbours for their liability insurance; the Villager Minibus service for a new minibus; Dancevybz dance group to support their attendance at the European and then the World Street Dance championships (congratulations to them!); Harrold Twinning Association to support their community social events; Harrold Toddler Group for start-up equipment; Harrold Scout Group for camping equipment; Harrold Lawn Tennis Club for their court fencing; Harrold Allotment Association for their noticeboard; Harrold Preschool for their awning/building; Harrold Online for the new village website.

Strategy 2: Improving the look of the village

Another of the council's continued strategies has been to improve and smarten the look of the village. In the last four years we have: built the stone wall down by the bridge and removed the unattractive metal railings; restored the war memorial, added the WW1 "Tommy" figure and sited the memorial bench next to it; designed and purchased 3 new village entrance signs (still being manufactured); repaired/restored the Lych gate at St Peter's church; installed two wooden bins on the Lower Green in an effort to reduce the amount of littering that happens in that area; employed a Street Ranger to litterpick, clear leaves and empty the village bins, which would regularly overflow; repainted over 100 lampposts along the High Street and other main roads; restored all the ornamental fire hydrants throughout the village; replaced all the wooden bollards on The Green and removed the rusty chains; replaced the pedestrian crossing poles that had turned green; replaced all the plastic High Street bins with the attractive cast iron bins; installed the "2016" new cast iron benches and restored the existing metal benches to their former glory; started a program of tree maintenance including trees on The Green and Lower Green; a plethora of other smaller maintenance items, including playground fixes.

Strategy 3: Facilities and services

We completely replaced the playground at Harewelle Way, encouraging the transfer of ownership from the developer, took over a lease for the land and took ownership of £149k to maintain the land; replaced the climbing frame/fort and soft surface at Saxon House End playground, which had reached end-of-life; extensively refurbished the Harrold Centre playground with the large playfort and other pieces of new equipment; later we replaced the playfort in the toddler section of the Harrold Centre playground; we are continuing to work with the playing field association (HPFA) to deliver a renovated sports pavilion; the refurbishments to the HPFA-owned Scout Hut are nearing completion and include internal cladding of the walls, kitchen improvements and improvements to the heating. The council has set aside £100k from reserves to fund the two HPFA projects; we transferred approximately £143k for the Harrold Centre redevelopment project; installed an Outdoor Gym in the Harrold/Odell country park, upon a request from residents; added new ramps to the skate park in the country park and resurfaced the current ramp; initiated gritting of the High

Street and Medical Practice pavements; bought a defibrillator for the High Street and arranged training on its use; instigated re-mortaring of the Lockup on The Green (expected shortly); we also created a good-looking new council website and regularly update the Parish Council Facebook page to keep you informed of what we're up to.

SpeedWatch group

The SpeedWatch group was created and continues to attempt to curb speeding in the village. We also purchased two portable speed signs for the village (VAS) and report the data to the police.

Developing the Neighbourhood Plan and the Catesby Estates/Odell Road planning application

The Parish Council is aware that Catesby Estates are actively promoting plans, and have submitted a planning application, to build approximately 90 houses on a site on Odell Road. The Parish Council has made very good progress in developing a Neighbourhood Plan for Harrold. This plan will, in line with the requirements imposed by Bedford Borough Council and the government, result in some new developments in Harrold. However, the expected scope of development is proposed to be within the prescribed range of 25 to 50 dwellings. This reflects the preferences of the village as a whole and is consistent with the strategic policies of the Development Plan for the area.

The Neighbourhood Plan has entered into its next phase with a further village consultation for May/June. This consultation will give villagers an opportunity to express their views on the viable development sites and, in particular, the allocation of dwellings to the viable sites. In preparation of this consultation the Neighbourhood Plan wrote to all site owners in February requesting further information on the relevant sites and asked for confirmation that land owners would be prepared to accommodate development of up to 10 dwellings per site. The site promoted by Catesby Estates is part of the land submitted for consideration by the Neighbourhood Plan and as a result this request was also sent to Catesby Estates.

The Parish Council will proceed with the Neighbourhood Plan as planned and intends to have a draft plan ready for submission by the end of 2019. Separately, the Parish Council will carefully monitor and consider the developments in respect of the site on Odell Road promoted by Catesby Estates. The Parish Council views Catesby Estates plans at this time as an unwelcome distraction, especially given that it is clearly out of step with the proposed Neighbourhood Plan for Harrold, and the expectations of the community and Bedford Borough Council. The Parish Council is also concerned that the extent of development proposed would be out of character with the immediate built form of Odell Road, extending the built form out of the village. The location, adjacent to a busy road junction, will present significant challenges in achieving suitable highway access (as experienced with previous aspirations for this site). Moreover, the Parish Council considers that any development of this magnitude and in this location would need to be seen holistically in conjunction with the impact of the required large-scale developments expected in Sharnbrook. The Parish Council will be making formal representations to Bedford Borough Council.

As you can see, we have covered a lot of ground over the last four years and we still have plenty happening. We have councillor vacancies, so if you'd like to join us for our next four-year journey then please get in touch!

Robert Tickle Chair - Harrold Parish Council

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The next meetings are June 12th and July 10th in the Harrold Centre. There is no meeting in August. All are very welcome and encouraged to attend; there is a public open forum at 7.30pm at every meeting. Please email the clerk if you wish to address the council as we may wish to add the item to the main agenda so that we can take immediate action. Please note that the clerk role is part time, so you may not receive an immediate response to correspondence - although I do try to be flexible and spread my time through the week.