

Hasketon Parish Annual Meeting, held on 12 May 2022 at the Victory Hall.

Welcome to this annual meeting of Hasketon Parish. I am sorry that I can't be with you tonight but I have a chest infection which I wouldn't want to impose on any of you! Also I have virtually lost my voice! So here is my report on the activities of the parish council over the last year for Iain to read in my place.

This time last year we were still meeting remotely because of the pandemic and held our first annual parish meeting for two years over zoom. People were still receiving their first vaccination and restrictions on meeting others were still in place (although, as it turns out these rules did not appear to apply in Downing Street!) We were supporting the Hasketon Pantry in St Andrew's Church porch financially and generally trying to support our fellow parishioners through the pandemic.

I want to record my thanks to all the members of the parish council for sticking with their roles during the last two years. Parish councillors are unpaid members of the community who give of their time freely to help the people of the parish in which we all live. You are the unsung public servants and you are all heroes in my eyes – so thank you all.

During the last year we have had two councillors leave us:- Jemima Withey, publican at the Turks Head, stood down upon the sale of the Pub and at our meeting in November we recorded our thanks for her service. Then at our January meeting a long serving councillor, Sarah Butters stood down. Sarah joined the parish council in 2015 and she was a conscientious and questioning member of the council who used her extensive local knowledge to good effect. We shall miss her. We have also welcomed a new member, Bill Helm. Bill moved to the village in 2018 and has almost been an associate member of the parish council by dint of his interest in the Quiet Lanes scheme - of which more anon. He is a very welcome addition to the council.

I also want to say thank you to our district councillor Colin Hedgley who has attended our meetings assiduously and has given us good advice in relation to planning matters and financial support from his locality money. During the year we also welcomed our new County Councillor Elaine Bryce which we were very pleased to do because we had been unrepresented at the county council for over a year before that.

At our annual parish council meeting last year in May David Keeble, our clerk gave notice of his intention to retire from the role. We were sorry to see David go because he had been an excellent parish Clerk for 5 years. He very kindly said that he would stay on until a successor had been found. We advertised and recruited a successor. David said he would stay on until she had completed the online training course. This she did but then realized that she was taking on too much with her other commitments and resigned after two months. We advertised again and eventually interviewed two candidates and appointed Steve Leckie. He attended our brief in person January meeting (omicron running wild!) He jointly took minutes at our March meeting with David and is flying solo tonight for the first time! So welcome Steve.

As to the business of the Parish Council - the last year has seen the quiet lanes scheme come to fruition with the installation of the signs on all the roads and lanes that had been identified and approved. Thank you to Stuart and Bill and David for all

the hard work that went into the bureaucracy of applying for and getting approval for the Hasketon scheme.

Our scrutiny of planning applications has continued and the responses are always thoughtful and usually unanimous. Most applications get a recommendation for approval but those that don't normally have strong reasons why they should not be accepted. Thank you to parish councillors for attending extraordinary meetings to carry out this scrutiny. Our duties to keep the public areas for which we are responsible safe and tidy have continued. The allotments give little trouble. Our financial position remains strong and we have not increased our precept for the ninth year in a row but we must spend some of our earmarked reserves in the coming year. Refurbishment of part of the village hall and new play equipment must be a priority. We continue to maintain the defibrillator and look after the war memorial and bus shelter. We check footpaths and report deficiencies. We report potholes and although it sometimes takes time for them to be repaired (e.g. the Grand Canyon of Shrubbery Road) they have been sorted. Thank you to Iain Whyte for his continued stewardship of the Village Hall and the play area.

We have been less successful with our requests in relation to the B1079. We have been banging on to the County council about the safety of this road for the nine years that I have been on the parish council. Promises have been made that have not been kept. And I remain very concerned that someone will lose their life or be very seriously injured on the road near Grange farm where the adverse camber can catch even a careful motorist out. Looking back at the minutes of the parish council I can see that request to improve the safety of this road as it passes through the parish have been made almost every year since 1978! The biggest improvement was actually carried out by the new residents of Prospect House who removed the trees on edge of the chicane near the entrance to Mill Lane. The road marking scheme promised by David Chennery three years ago has never materialized. Sometimes I despair!

This will be my last annual report as I am standing down from the Parish Council at the end of May as (subject to contract) we are moving from Hasketon to be in your family in St Albans and London. I have enjoyed this latter part of my public service (47 years continuously) and thank you all for your support over the last nine years. Best wishes to you all and to the village for the future.