

AKELEY PARISH COUNCIL: ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

March 10th 2014

As in previous years, I would like to start this report by thanking my fellow councillors (Elaine Rowlands, Mary Taylor, Alice Guise, Brian Coxall, John Hockley and Terry Cavender) for all their contributions, help and support over the year. I should also congratulate John Hockley for completing over 20 years service on Akeley Parish Council. A very big thank you is also due to the Parish Clerk (Ellen Sayer) for ensuring that everything has run so smoothly over the past year; particularly in terms of ensuring that our finances are always in excellent order and systematically dealing with the increasing number of e-mails that the Parish Council receives.

Item 2 on the agenda for Parish Council meetings is always "Items of Interest and Public Session". A few of the reported items are as follows: an article, including a photograph, of the presentation to Stanley Bennett to mark 36 years of service on Akeley Parish Council was published in the May 2013 edition of the 'Clerks and Councils Direct' national newsletter; a commemorative plaque, for which the cost was partly funded by the Parish Council in conjunction with the Events Committee organised by John Norman, was mounted on the Diamond Jubilee Beacon and a new seat was provided and installed on the grassed area on Manor Road thanks to the generosity of local residents.

The Parish Council has carried out its 'usual' duties over the year employing contractors to ensure that the Recreational Field, Wildlife Area, Children's Play Area and Churchyard are kept in good order. We were also able to use the 'Vale Volunteers Group' to carry out work on the trees along the 'Dog Walk' on the Recreational Field. Frances White has also kindly agreed to take on the role of works liaison person for the Wildlife Area. Information relevant to the village continues to be provided by the village newsletter 'Akeley News', the village website and the independent community forum 'Akeley News and Views'. The prospects for superfast broadband for the village seem positive and thanks are due to Terry Cavender for all his work in this area.

One result of a village inspection carried out with the Local Area Technician was that new 'village entrance gates' have been installed on the A413. However, the state of the roads, including drainage, in the village and the surrounding area remains a key concern. Recent work has ameliorated the flooding problem at the corner of Leckhampstead Road and thanks are due to local residents and Terry Cavender for their persistence in pressing TfB to take action.

The introduction of 'Local Development Orders', which apply to relatively small, straightforward, household extensions, means that the Parish Council will no longer be required to comment on such applications (except if they are in the village conservation area). The survey that the Parish Council carried out in 2008 with regards the provision of rural affordable housing in the village is now officially out of date and can no longer be

used as evidence of a need for such housing. The Parish Council will consider whether a new survey should be carried out. At present, it is not clear what the consequences will be for small rural villages because of the withdrawal of the Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VALP). In the case of Akeley, the draft plan published in September 2012 stated Akeley's new housing allocation (over a 20 year period) was 9, capped at 10. This capping was removed from the next version of the VALP. It remains to be seen what the next version will recommend.

Finally, I need to report that at the end of the meeting in January 2014 I stepped down as Chairman of the Parish Council, but I will still remain as a councillor. Terry Cavender has taken over as Chairman and I wish him well in this role that, although it can be challenging, can also be very rewarding.

Mike Mortimer, Chairman (up to January 2014), Akeley Parish Council