

**FARTHINGHOE PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Annual Parish Meeting**  
**Village Hall**  
**19.30 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016**

I would like to start by welcoming everyone attending the 2016 Farthinghoe Annual Parish Meeting. I am also delighted to welcome back this year our County Councillor Ron Sawbridge MBE and our District Councillor Rebecca Breese.

2015 was an election year for the parish council which saw all 7 parish councillors retain their seats in an uncontested election. The continuity of parish councillors has undoubtedly been extremely positive for the parish. I would therefore like to thank all of my fellow councillors for their ongoing passion and commitment to the parish, their hard work and personal support. I would also like to thank our parish clerk, Pip Clayton. Having very quickly revolutionised the administration of the Parish Council since joining in October 2014, she has this year truly cemented the processes and procedures which are essential for the efficient running of the parish council.

This year has certainly been a busy year for the parish council as we continue to deliver on the aims and objectives that we set out at last year's APM, which were to protect and enhance Farthinghoe whilst improving communication with the parish.

### ***Communication***

Communication between the Parish Council and Parishioners continues to be enhanced at every opportunity.

- The new Parish Council email distribution list has proven highly effective this year, providing critical information and updates in relation to priority items such as the proposed solar farm and the resurfacing of the A422 through Farthinghoe. We now have 28 people signed up to the distribution list and I would encourage anyone that is yet to sign up to go onto the Parish website and do so following tonight's meeting.
- Parish Council Minutes continue to be drafted and uploaded to the website within a few days of the parish council meeting. I would therefore urge parishioners to use these as the first port of call for real time information in relation to parish council activities. In addition the noticeboard next to the Fox has been restored this year thanks to Mike Phipps and this provides a further source of reference. Thank you to Christine Hunt for managing this noticeboard, which is available for any villagers to post items they wish to share.
- The Farthinghoe Chronicle continues to be a highly beneficial resource to the parish and feedback is always extremely positive. I would therefore like to thank Pip Clayton for all of her hard work on the Chronicle as the interim editor and to Oliver Cornock for taking over as the permanent editor last year. We are extremely lucky to have such a qualified editor taking charge of our small monthly production. In addition, Rosemary does a sterling job of delivery come hail or shine for which we are very grateful. The Chronicle is extremely valuable to businesses in our village and due to this we have been able to reduce the annual cost to parishioners by pricing advertising more appropriately.

### ***Traffic***

One of the major issues impacting our Parish continues to be traffic. As such, traffic remains a high priority to the Parish Council and I would like to specifically thank Councillor Grant and Councillor Morris for their continued hard work on behalf of this parish in relation to this ongoing issue.

2015 saw the full resurfacing of the A422 through Farthinghoe which has been hugely beneficial to the village and especially the properties in close proximity of the road. The resurfacing has seen hugely reduced noise pollution as well as also reducing the amount of vibrations caused by heavy vehicles hitting pot holes, which was impacting surrounding properties. A further benefit has been the considerable reduction in road accidents on the A422 around the village.

At last year's APM we reconfirmed our commitment to obtain a bypass for Farthinghoe, having been passed over for around 30 years. In recent months, significant progress has been made with Northampton County Council attending a number of Parish Council meetings to discuss the potential for a bypass scheme for Farthinghoe. In December 2015, NCC undertook an exhibition and detailed survey. The exhibition was well attended by the village with 140 attendees over two days. In addition 137 parishioners completed the survey, the results of which reconfirmed the parish's belief that a bypass is required. Out of the two route options, the survey showed that the preferred route was to the north of the village. Farthinghoe Parish Council continues to work with NCC with the aim of getting a full bypass scheme approved for Farthinghoe whilst obtaining the best possible route to minimise the impact to the north of the village.

### ***Playpark***

At the last APM we advised that roughly half of the funding required for the playpark upgrade had been obtained and as such £20,000 remained outstanding. However, due to the relentless commitment of the playpark committee, the remaining £20,000 was obtained through a Viridor grant. I would therefore like to take the opportunity to thank the playpark committee for creating such an amazing asset for the village's children.

Following the upgrade of the playpark, the parish council has been extremely concerned about the speed of traffic along Clarkes Road. Given this, Councillor Grant has been working with Highways to obtain a new 30 mph speed limit past the playpark along with new signage. I am delighted to announce that our requests have been accepted and we can expect to see the new speed limit and signage installed in the next month.

### ***Street Lights***

A great deal of work has this year been put into campaigning to replace the streetlights in Farthinghoe with LEDs. Not only would LEDs significantly reduce the annual electricity costs and maintenance fees but also provide improved visibility and safety in the village. This is particularly important along the A422 where visibility on dark nights can be very limited. So far we have not been successful in obtaining funding from NCC for the conversion of the lights on the A422, however we will continue our efforts to obtain funding moving forward.

### ***Village Hall***

I am delighted to announce that since our plea at the last APM, support for the village hall has increased significantly. The last year has seen a new committee member, a new secretary and treasurer. In addition, there is now a designated events committee to organise various village social events, the first of which was the Christmas Ball which was supported by in excess of 70 villagers. With a full list of events being planned for the rest of the year, coupled with internal decorating, the village hall is certainly back on the rise. I would like to thank everyone who is involved with the village hall for their ongoing hard work to maintain it for the parish and I would like to encourage as many villagers as possible to support the upcoming events.

### ***Maintenance***

The visual appearance of our village is something that the Parish Council attempts to maintain with extremely limited resources. There is very limited assistance from NCC and a very small parish budget for maintenance. I would therefore ask everyone where possible to help with the public areas near to their own homes whilst also treating the village with respect. In recent months there has been a significant increase in dog fouling which is a hazard to villagers, whilst parking and driving on verges has cut up the grass which takes a long time to regenerate, if at all.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a personal thank you to those that do get involved in maintaining the appearance of the village. Recently the village sign was restored and re-sited by Dave Clayton, Sue Abbiss-Stubbs, Val King and Steve Pillinger. Mick Morris and Dave Clayton have done a lot of work on the bus stop and surrounding foliage and a small army of volunteers assist with keeping the churchyard tidy. I would also like to thank Jim Jones again this year for continuing to pick up litter around the village.

### ***Solar Farm***

At the last APM we reported that the proposed solar farm development had been rejected by the South Northants Planning Department on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2014. Green Energy was then given a 6 month period in which to appeal the decision but against significant headwinds no appeal was lodged.

I would once again like to appeal for as many people as possible to sign up to our email database after this meeting as it is the fastest way for the Parish Council to warn the parish of potential risks.

### ***Financial Report Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016***

Please refer to the financial report dated 10<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

### ***Precept***

Having maintained the parish precept at £6,500 since March 2010 we have this year taken the difficult decision of increasing it by £650 to £7,150. The increase comes as a direct result of the cost increases outlined in the financial report along with further budgeted price increases in the upcoming financial year.

Based on budgeted cost increases the Parish Council has set a budget of £7,050 for the 2016/2017 financial year. This will be fully covered by the new precept of £7,150 which will allow the Parish Council to maintain the current level of cash reserves which must remain in excess of 50% of the annual precept.

Whilst the financial report suggests adequate cash reserves of £5,230.50 this figure is artificially inflated by an unexpected transparency funding grant of £965 received last month. The grant was achieved due to an application for funding drafted by Pip Clayton and now allows the parish council to purchase its own IT equipment and further invest in the parish council website which in turn will improve communication and transparency of information. As such the true closing balance is £4,265.

Against the backdrop of cost increases, the Parish Council will continue to drive cost savings where possible. To date we have brought the management of the parish website in house and reduced the net cost of the Chronicle through increased advertising rates. Please rest assured that precept funds will continue to be spent with care on essential areas and with full transparency.

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to attend tonight's APM.