



Farthinghoe and Steane Parish Council

17/04/2024

Chairman's Report for the 2023/2024 Annual Parish Meeting

In May 2023 the country celebrated the first Coronation of a UK Monarch in 70 years with the crowning of King Charles III.

For a large proportion of our population this had been a new experience and on Sunday May 6th the Parish Council invited all residents to a celebratory lunch with a bouncy castle for the children. Fortunately, the weather was very kind to us and the occasion was thoroughly enjoyed by all who came.

As a small boy in 1953 my first experience of a Coronation was also to see a television for the first time, albeit black and white with a very small screen and a magnifying glass. Never to be forgotten!!

Covid nowadays seems to have receded into the background for most of us, but unfortunately the events in Ukraine have now been added to by those in the Middle East.

We pray that political solutions can soon be found and that a peaceful life will return for all.

We reported last year that the Parish Council electricity costs had escalated considerably, but are now pleased to report that this year's streetlight budget appears to be more manageable.

This year has again been tinged with sadness in the Parish with the loss of Rosemary Ewen, Pippa Clayton, Neil Gunn, John Deeley and Bud Mason. Rosemary, Pippa, Neil, John and Bud will be greatly missed and their memories will always live on in our hearts. Our thoughts and prayers go out to their families and friends to help them to cope with their sad losses.

Continuing on with subjects mentioned in the 2023 report.

1 Farthinghoe and Steane Parish Council

Our thanks go out to Dave Weston for his fine efforts as our Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

We are truly lucky to have Dave helping us, again with efforts considerably outside of his remit.

I would like to express my personal appreciation to all of our Councillors for their efforts throughout the course of this year.

This year saw the resignation of Cllr Henry Bankes Jones whose increased work commitments in London have made it very difficult for him to attend meetings regularly. We appreciate these circumstances and thank Henry for

his 9 years of committed service to the Parish Council and will miss his valued input

We are pleased to welcome Cllr Sophie Nobes to our council this year.

Sophie has really hit the ground running and for anyone who had seen her superb input in opposition to a huge Logistics Warehouse Complex at Junction 11 M40 will understand exactly what I mean.

Had this Planning Application succeeded we could have seen a twofold or even threefold increase in the numbers of HGVs coming through Farthinghoe. In contrast we were concerned to see no visible input from West Northants Council Planning or Highways to support or protect us against the same threat.

Work has begun in preparation for a new Parish Council website to be launched later in the year which will be inclusive of a hub for village activities.

2 Farthinghoe Bypass

I could continue to write reams on this subject in which we, as a Parish Council, are not happy with the performance of West Northants Council and a subject which seems to have receded in the interests of our Member of Parliament, having been stated as the number one priority during the General Election canvassing of November 2019. (See the video shown on the Parish Council Website)

However, this year the WNC Portfolio Holder for Highways, Cllr Phil Larratt, has accepted our invitation to attend our APM to give us an update and for us the opportunity to put our questions to him.

The Parish Council had written a lengthy mail to WNC Highways on 22/01/2024 questioning the completeness and accuracy of the 152 page SOC/BCR report and calculation.

Despite not having the courtesy of a reply to our mail Cllr Larratt deemed it right and proper to announce on two occasions on the BBC that the Bypass project has been curtailed.

We believe that his actions were wrong as well as being utterly and completely disrespectful.

Unfortunately, our opinion differs somewhat to that of our MP who sees this as a perfectly acceptable action or possibly inaction.

Put simply we see the bypass situation in the following terms

A major highway being not fit for purpose

170 homes with 400 people

12000 + vehicles per day using said highway.

The lives and safety of those people being totally ruined and put at risk by those 12000 vehicles using that unsuitable major highway, a road with serious geometric, structural and drainage deficiencies.

A recent meeting with Dame Andrea has cast light on the reason why her interest has recently seemed to wane.

She advised us that the most important part of her role as the elected Member of Parliament for South Northants is to be at Westminster 3 days a week making laws and not to be listening to and helping to resolve important local issues which she considered to be the work of local Councillors.

It was made clear that neither she nor her assistant appreciated receiving details relating to issues such as our bypass on a regular basis.

As the meeting drew to a close it was clear that in her view the cheapest and quickest resolution to our highways problems was compulsory purchase of a number of homes which would then be demolished to allow for the road to be straightened.

Dame Andrea continued that this would speed up the traffic meaning that our situation would no longer be unique, but that we would join the other 77 parishes in South Northants in which traffic travels too quickly. Helpful thinking!!

It seems that being averse to too much detail extends to the point that she mistakenly feels that the short length of the pinch-point is the full extent of our highway problems within Farthinghoe Village.

How wrong could she be because, in reality, the problem extends from the allotment bus shelter to the driveways of London Barns and Little Farfield. We made clear to her that the Parish Council would steadfastly resist any such scheme which had the potential to increase danger and to destroy the character of our much loved village.

Times seem to have changed, but elections come and go along with people's opinions, so please draw your own conclusions.

A large proportion of the voluminous, incomplete and inaccurate 152 page BCR report produced by WNC Highways is actually totally irrelevant to our circumstances.

In spite of creating obstacles in providing us with a much needed and justified bypass WNC Highways seem to be hell bent on allowing the rest of the village streets to be overrun by potholes.

Their much-vaunted street inspections don't seem to be targeted at rectification and take little account of the fact that most of our streets are also used as our footpaths.

There is a system in place called "FixMyStreet" which we can all use to report Street problems

We should all make use this to report problems early because if we don't ask we will not get!!

If anyone needs guidance in how to use this reporting system then I am more than happy to help.

3 Bus Shelters

Recently we had requested that WNC consider the repositioning of an existing and little used litter bin in the village to be located adjacent to the

“Allotment” Bus Shelter to assist us with encouraging a reduction in a growing littering problem there.

The reply was received from WNC stating that this could not be justified.

This reply seems totally at odds to recent mails which have been circulated by WNC encouraging residents to tidy up our town. --No mention of villages!!

Cllr Larratt also has responsibility to Recycling and Garden waste collections.

Whilst he is with us, perhaps, he might make which justification for the well above inflation increase in the charge recently levied for Garden Waste collection (almost 40% in 2 years)

4 Village Hall

Activities at the Village Hall seem to be progressing well according to the latest report and we look forward to seeing the Solar Panels in place along with the proposed new storage container in lieu of the sheds.

It is encouraging to see that the committee has increased in numbers this year and we thank everyone involved for their efforts.

5 Farthinghoe Primary School

It is so good to see such a comprehensive and energetic report from the school. It maintains its Outstanding Rating and I feel that it is appropriate to name and say a big thank you to all involved who contribute to us having such a fine school.

You make our village feel so proud

Sharon Turner- Head of School

Steve Elson - Year 5 and 6 teacher

Alex Fisher - Year 3 and 4 teacher

Heather Price - Teaching Assistant and Wellbeing Mentor

Emma Lear - Teaching Assistant and Lunchtime Supervisor

Linda Thompson - Teaching Assistant

Helen Hodson - EYFS Teaching Assistant

Katie Woolacott - Bursar

Rheanne Saunders - contracted (self-employed) Music teacher

Michelle Campbell - long-term supply teacher

6 Farthinghoe Chronicle

A big thank you to Rosemary, Viv, Nick and to James for ensuring that our monthly Parish news and information is delivered come hell or high water.

7 Dashwood Play Park

I would like to Hijack part of the Dashwood Playpark report

“We suspect that in the next couple of years we may need to treat/replace the main wooden supports of the climbing frames, due to damp. This will not be a cheap option but if we wish to retain this valuable asset then we will need financial support from the Village in fund raising for

this eventuality. Doing nothing is not an option, as it may necessitate closure of the Playpark, if we do not maintain the operational safety of the equipment, properly”

This is a very important aspect that needs to be considered village wide with thoughts of how we might begin to find finances to counter something which is inevitable.

If we do not take care of the Playpark we will lose it and losing it is also an expensive option and not just in money terms.

8 Cope Lodge Solar Farm

The Cope Lodge Solar Farm at Greatworth was at first rejected by WNC Planning but this was followed by an Appeal by the Developer against the judgement.

There followed a very lengthy, expensive and complicated appeal procedure in which the Planning Inspectorate overturned the WNC rejection.

However, it is now understood that a Greatworth resident has elevated this situation to the Secretary of State in order to overturn the Planning Inspectorate judgement.

Apparently a very similar situation has recently occurred with an almost identical Solar Farm at Gayton near Towcester in which the Secretary of State has eventually reversed the Planning Inspectorate judgement.

We will keep you posted.

9 500 Bus Service

After a period of concern, we are very pleased to see the introduction of the Banbury-Brackley-Bicester timetable allied with the extension of the Government sponsored £2.00 minimum fare scheme.

This has seen increased access to many parts of Brackley together with direct access to the Gateway Shopping Centre in Banbury.

Both Evening and Sunday services have also been reinstated.

In all a very welcome initiative which has seen considerable increase in usage of the bus services.

10 Parish Council Database

It is the intention of the Parish Council to send urgent and important information to every household in the Parish simultaneously at the touch of a button.

We are making good progress as almost 100 people have now registered.

It is intended to use only for important information and of course de-listing can be requested at any time.

PLEASE HELP US TO KEEP YOU INFORMED BY REGISTERING

Yours Sincerely

Cllr Mick Morris

Chairman –Farthinghoe and Steane Parish Council