

Broughton and Milton Keynes Parish Council
Chair's Annual Report 2017/18
11th May 2018

Introduction

The over-riding theme for this 'Parish Year' has been restoring and updating our policies, procedures and contractual arrangements. This is tedious work but essential as we enter a period of devolution of services from the Borough Council. We are now in much better shape thanks to our hard-working team of Councillors and staff. We have also invested in a new IT platform in order to accommodate the expansion of our parish, which is going to be one of the top 5 size wise once all development is complete.

People

We have been fortunate to recruit Vicky Mote as our Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. The position has been expanded from part-time to full time. We also retain the services of Alison McNaughton as our part time administrator and Colin Bowker as Warden contractor. With the new office in Atlas Way working well we now have cover for all weekdays to deal with any urgent issues.

We are now fully recruited with 12 Councillors (John Bint, Gary Brighton, Julie Chambers, Delroy Hudson, David Monk, Ricky Oates, Yemi Olayemi, Jo Small, Tim Small – *Vice Chair*, Mez Solanki, Patrick Stiles, Liz Swinton) representing all areas of the Parish.

Contracts

Since the last Chair's report, we have successfully executed the lease agreement with MK Pavilions and meeting our expectations of the Middleton Pavilion, which has been working very well. Residents in the area also seem to be happy with the new tenants.

We declined to take on the 'Broughton Beans' café venture on the advice of retail consultants and in view of the practical considerations in running such an operation.

We have five allotment sites within the Parish and these have required a lot of attention:

- The terms and condition of use for tenant were in need of substantial updating.
- The allotment account has never been separately accounted and we found that the costs of administration and maintenance of the sites left us in a deficit position with the rental income.
- The landscaping care was being done without a written contract in place.
- One of the sites has continued to suffer sewer flooding despite assurances from the water company.
- New terms and conditions have been deployed, together with increased charges to help towards balancing the account.
- We have appointed a new landscape contractor which allows us to manage the routine maintenance with greater control.
- We have escalated the flooding issue to the highest level within the Anglian Water Group.
- We moved all accounts to a Rialtas Allotment management system.

During the year we have performed phase one of all of the safety recommendations pursuant to our tree survey and made various one-off repairs and rubbish clearance to the allotment sites (mainly Walton Road and Middleton).

We have prepared a new contract for the lease of the twin garages that are used by the cricket club and are not covered by the Pavilion lease.

Grants

The Parish Council has made a number of grants to community based organisations enabling many children to take part in organised activities. Several resident based groups have received support for social activities and we hope these will seed fund their growth to becoming self-sustainable.

Funding support to the outreach program of the Citizens Advice Bureau was also provided to support residents needing this service. This will now be offered from the Parish Council Offices on a Tuesday, fortnightly.

On a brighter note – we provided funding support for the MK Village Firework Display which again attracted several thousand visitors. This event is managed by the Trustees of the Village Hall and it was good to see the cooperation with the Middleton Pavilion who made a substantial contribution to the task and takings.

The display raised £5,700 in support of our local hospice at Willen.

Efficiency

Public procurement is always more complex than private and the selection of the new landscape contractor has consumed a lot of time. The benefit is that we now have a professionally documented scheme of work for all our requirements and we have done this within the same budget or less.

Our Policies and Procedures have been substantially expanded and revised to cover many aspects of Parish Council operations including terms of employment, performance review, hours of working etc.

The management accounts have been moved from spreadsheets to a new Rialtas system making reporting easier and less error prone.

Our computing system has been moved to Cloudy IT who provide us with a secure cloud-based system, which is properly backed up and supported.

Strategy

We recently held our second Strategy review which affirmed the huge list of potential activities for the Parish Council. As reported last time there are plans afoot to devolve power and control from the Borough Council to the Parish level. Unfortunately, this does not come wrapped with an inflation proofed cash amount. It is also unclear whether parishes can resource such services on a smaller scale and without professionally qualified expert staff. Nonetheless this express train has left the station, so we need to be alert to the pitfalls. The danger is that these changes will occur and be followed by restrictions on taxes to cover the costs. We shall see but we are looking out for tax-payer's charges as well as civic responsibility

David W. Monk
Chairman, Broughton and Milton Keynes Parish Council