**ADDINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

**Annual Parish Meeting 22 May 2019**

**Report of the Chairman of the Parish Council**

We’ve had a great deal to do over the last year, and I am delighted to tell you about everything that we’ve achieved, as well as some of the things, well, one thing in particular, that still has to be marked as work in progress – not because of lack of effort on our part I can tell you! More of this later.

But now, the best bits first.

It is a real achievement for us that we have managed to put grant funding in place and repair the Old School on Main St. The newly refurbished building should be open for business shortly, with the library back on the ground floor and our new Hub upstairs in the old school room. We are planning a grand opening and launch event on 22 June – everyone is invited! Come along and look round the building – you’ll be amazed to see how different and fresh it looks, and how much more useful it will be to us as a community. The parish council was entrusted with the care of this Grade II listed building back in the 1970s, and I’m so glad that we have been able to preserve and improve it for the village for generations to come – and all this without major cost to local taxpayers! I want to thank all the volunteers who’ve worked hard with us to get to this point, and especially those who worked on the grant funding applications – well done!

Another key achievement for us this year has been improving our management of the sports facilities off Stockinger Lane. The MUGA is now being managed by the council and systems have been set up for organised groups to use it, even while it remains open and free for public use at all times. The new public toilets, built last year at the end of the sports pavilion, are being well-used, both by users of the MUGA and by children and visitors enjoying the play park areas by the Memorial Hall. We have recently taken steps to secure the Stockinger Lane site and car park, and are working with our local community support officers to help keep these public spaces safe. From this month, improved arrangements have also been agreed for use of the sports pavilion. This means that the council will be deriving income from short term lets of the building for sports sessions, and this income will be used to cover maintenance and service costs for the facility as a whole.

These are just 2 examples of ways in which the council continues to work hard to run services for the village as cost effectively as possible for local taxpayers. As a local council, we raise taxes through the parish precept to fund our business. Last year, the precept was increased to help towards the costs of the capital project at the Old School. This was a one-off increase for a specific financial purpose, which, in the event, has been fortunately met, in the main, from grant funds. The additional precept monies raised are now being used to fund the equipping and managing of our important new village facility – the community Hub. We are also finding it necessary to ensure we have sufficient funds in hand to pick up the costs of services being withdrawn by Bradford council. The parish council is now providing direct financial support for the community library, which used to be funded by Bradford. We are expecting that we’ll have to take on responsibilities for street cleaning and grass cutting. These services matter to all of us who take pride in caring for our local community, and they have to be paid for. Take the costs of providing these additional services out, and our precept has remained constant now over a number of years – we need a certain level of funding from local taxation just to pay for the normal running of the council’s operations. Some 50% of funds raised is actually spent on staff and contractor costs, and – believe me – we are lucky in getting such excellent value for money out of our hard-working clerk, caretaker/administrator and village lengthsman! My thanks to all three of them!

The council is also a major landowner, running allotments and land rentals throughout the village, as well as managing and supporting other assets, such as the bowling green and children’s play areas at the Silsden Rd recreation ground and Hoffman Wood. Managing assets is a costly business, not least because legal costs have to be incurred from time to time, as any householder will know, whenever you want to do anything with them. Unlike larger councils, we do not have teams of in-house maintenance staff who can be despatched to fix, mend and do, when things break or go wrong. Just like any other householder, we have to organise contractors and pay for most of these minor maintenance works as and when required. We are very fortunate in having so many of our councillors willing to give their time on a voluntary basis towards the upkeep of our assets – this helps enormously for us in keeping costs down and managing our services effectively. My thanks to all of the councillors – both those now serving on the council, and those who said goodbye to us before the elections a couple of weeks ago.

These elections mark a key point for the council. A local council like Addingham is elected for a 4-year term, and the start of each new term is a time of renewal. I am delighted to welcome 2 new members to our council and I hope are enjoying taking part in their first council meetings – the next one is due to take place immediately after this parish meeting. The elections resulted in a couple of vacancies as well, and we will be looking to co-opt an additional 2 members to join us later in the year. If any of you would like to come on board, please see me or the Clerk afterwards, or put your name forward in response to the adverts on our noticeboards and website now. It’s an exciting time to join the council – we are achieving a lot, but there is much left to do.

And so, on to those works in progress.

Perhaps the most significant of these is the neighbourhood plan. Many people in the village will have been wondering what’s happened to it. Well, we worked hard to produce our final draft version, which we sent to Bradford council last October. It is now entirely in their hands to have it examined and then put to a referendum. At one stage, we had hoped that this could have taken place alongside the local elections, but clearly this was somewhat optimistic. All we can do now is wait while Bradford passes the document through their formal processes. As soon as we can, we will be springing back into action to tell you what’s happening and what to do next!

Our many other projects, some of them arising from work on the neighbourhood plan, will be ongoing for time to come. Over the year, the council has continued to work with all village groups, helping to support many of them financially with funding put towards the village gala, the Christmas market and the allotment and gardens annual events. We continue to work actively with the Civic Society, not least in our joint production of a twice-yearly village newsletter, and we are supporting its environment group’s activities and its 4Becks project. We are pleased to be taking forward ideas for improvement of the Hoffman Wood field with the environment group, and will also be working with the Scouts to use the field for a Remembrance event this year.

So I look back on the past year and note our achievements, and I also look forward to this coming year. I am especially looking forward to working with the new council with all its fresh ideas and enthusiasm. We want to work together and with all residents to get things done for Addingham so we can continue making it a better place for all of us to live.