

KILHAM PARISH COUNCIL
REPORT TO THE ANNUAL MEETING - MAY 2018

It is only fitting that I start this year's report by paying tribute to John Girling. John recently became unwell but then seemed to be on the mend and so his untimely death on 17 March 2018 was all the more shocking and unexpected.

John was a proper Kilham character who loved his village and had an amazing knowledge of its history. All the while he was a parish councillor he never threw away any material and consequently he amassed a treasure trove of village related documents. When John was kind enough to let me delve into his archive to recover lost parish council records and research material for the village map I found that he had parish council records dating back 30 years to 1988. His contribution to this community runs much deeper than we would ever guess as he made his mark quietly and without fuss. Those who knew John were enriched and they will remember him with warmth and respect. Our sympathy and thoughts are with his family and friends.

As in previous years the purpose of my report is to provide a summary of the activity of Kilham Parish Council during the period from May 2017 to April 2018 and to show what has been achieved when set against the expected outcomes.

A full complement of experienced councillors has enabled what appears to be increasingly long agenda, to be dealt with conscientiously and effectively and with the added bonus of good humour. It was therefore a huge disappointment to get resignations this March from Denise Hayhurst and Sandra Van der Kooij. To lose these two very able and highly respected councillors has saddened us, but we have to acknowledge the logic and validity of their respective decisions. The council is now in the process of replacing them by co-option and we are already looking forward to the new energy and fresh perspective these new councillors will no doubt provide.

There were no major new projects planned for this year but as usual there remained outstanding items from last year's list. Substantial tree maintenance work was carried out to 3 Horse Chestnut, 11 Lime and a cluster of Yew trees in All Saints Churchyard last December. The Garden of Remembrance received a significant makeover which was financed in part from the Lissett Community Wind Farm Fund. All the furniture has been

replaced and the paved area repaired. The long overdue refreshed welcome sign is now in place at the young children's play area by the village hall. There is also a new contact sign at the cemetery.

One unexpected development was brought about thanks to Christine Snowden for establishing the Kilham Computer Club. This well received initiative gave renewed impetus to the idea of having a Broadband WiFi connection in the village hall. After Gerry Horner gave a presentation to the Village Hall Committee he worked tirelessly to bring this facility successfully to fruition. Councillors readily agreed to finance the installation and running costs for the first two years as they were persuaded of the potential benefit to many users of the village hall.

This year we plan to replace a few rotting wooden fencing posts around the village pond and refresh the paintwork. There will be further attempts made to establish the ownership of the overgrown and unsightly land in Chantry Meadows. This small area has recently become unsightly and requires regular maintenance. Essential work to the cemetery is expected soon which will enhance the general appearance and resolve safety concerns. The play equipment in the play area by the village hall is looking tired and will be cleaned and all paintwork refreshed.

There continues to be some disquiet about the unknown implications of Fracking in our area. The Anti-Fracking lobby (not Kilham Parish Council) has organised monthly meetings. Some time ago the council made a commitment to inform residents of all Fracking matters that are brought to its attention through planning applications. Councillors are obliged to remain impartial about this issue irrespective of their personal views as they are mindful they represent all residents including those who have not expressed their views. They, however, have a duty to consider all pertinent facts and respond to any planning applications within Kilham - but these as yet have not materialised. When/if such planning applications appear the council would wish to hold a public meeting where local views can be aired before making any such response.

Jane Humphry has regularly informed the council about developments and she recently suggested that a Fracking Working Group be considered. Council approved this idea and four councillors now meet to assess and review developments to be reported to the council. A 'Fracking News' section has recently been added to our website.

Many of our meetings have been well attended when planning is on the agenda. The council greatly benefits from the input given from residents as often some thoughtful and wholly practical suggestions are put forward for modifications to plans. Concerns are eloquently expressed and usually leave the council in no doubt about its appropriate response. Yet there persists a sense that the views, suggestions and conditions expressed by the council and by those directly effected by these proposed developments are often ignored.

With this in mind it was decided to invite Stephen Hunt, Head of Planning and Development Management to attend our July meeting. The concerns of the parish council and residents regarding the proposed rapid expansion of Kilham were made clear. These concerns have arisen following an outlined planning application for 50 dwellings and the approved outline for 55 dwellings. This in addition to a number of smaller developments both outlined and currently under construction would, if all built, far exceed the target set in the development plan for 90 new homes to be built in the period to 2026.

The subjects discussed were the sewage system, Yorkshire Water, the Clackna Farm planning application, traffic concerns and the local plan. Questions were asked about what controls are in place to prevent potentially rapid and disproportionate development of the village. It was explained that it is only market forces that dictate the rate of development. This led to further questions about the time it might take (given the weak state of the housing market) to see developments come to completion with all the consequential disruption to the lives of neighbouring residents. Stephen Hunt and Jane Evison answered all questions openly and frankly but were unable to give much reassurance about the chances of Kilham retaining its attractive and distinctive qualities.

Highways issues are on every monthly agenda and issues raised are reported promptly. Responses are less prompt generally but with quality pestering and persistence there are occasional positive results e.g. 30 MPH repeater signs and pothole repairs on Back Lane. Highways are very aware of the poor state of North Back Lane and every pothole in the village.

The founding members of the Playing Field Association decided some months ago to stand down after 10 years hard work. There was an uncomfortable hiatus when there was

doubt about who might pick up the challenge of moving the project forward. The council in January were very pleased to welcome Nicola Knaggs, Liz Sellers and Kate Albutt who introduced themselves as the new fund raising team for the KPFA. They subsequently gave an update in March on the fund raising activities planned for the next couple of months and expressed their hope that the council will once again help the KPFA. Because of the recognised benefit to the community council agreed to continue the financial support, necessary to cover the basic costs this year, so that fund raising events can be seen to materially improve the site.

The feedback from Kilham residents has been far greater this year and we would like this trend to continue. It is important that you have accessible and approachable councillors who will listen to what they are told and help wherever possible.

While many of you can access the Kilham Newsletter online there are many who cannot and so we will continue to finance the production and delivery of paper copies to every home. Similarly while many contacts with the council are by email there are others who will telephone us or stop us on sight. Please help us to do the best we can for the village and tell us your good ideas for future developments.

My sincere thanks to everyone who has helped with the work of the council. Although this particular machine grinds on far too slowly in my view you are the oil that keeps the wheels turning and things moving forward. And a special word of thanks to Claire who is our exceptional Clerk and to Mark for his special talent for spotting my mistakes and making us all laugh.

Geoff Seward

Chairman, Kilham Parish Council

14th May 2018