

KILHAM PARISH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE ANNUAL MEETING - APRIL 2019

This report is a summary of the activity of Kilham Parish Council during the period from May 2018 to April 2019. It is to show what has been achieved or is still work in progress when set against the expected outcomes as outlined in last year's report and what has not been done.

This particular council will end its duties after the local elections next month and so this will be my last annual report. I therefore do not intend to put forward any objectives for the coming year but would hope in time to see the newly formed council show their renewed vigour and fresh thinking when they publish their own objectives.

The sudden loss of John Girling in March 2018 and the resignations of Denise Hayhurst and Sandra Van der Kooij that same month meant that we started our first meeting in May with three vacancies. Thankfully at this meeting we were able to co-opt and welcome Liz Sellers and David Tanner to the council. A month later Megan Price resigned to leave us then two under strength. But again we were very fortunate to fill these vacancies with the co-option of Tracey Warrington and Jenny Walker - two very able people with an intimate knowledge of the village. Just when after all the recent unprecedented turbulence we thought things might settle down Mark Buckle, our Vice Chairman and my reliable source of strength and wisdom, found it was necessary for personal commitments to step down. At this news I realised that we had not only lost 'one of the best' but we would lose that indefinable special quality, maybe that extra bit of confidence, that quirky, wicked sense of humour and joy that he brought to our meetings.

A few years ago it was unbelievably difficult to find replacement councillors and so it is worth noting that something has changed for the better. We found ourselves with the previously unknown luxury of two candidates competing for this latest vacancy and having to make a difficult choice. We chose Andy Oxley in November and thanked Merice Marshall who, for now, was the unsuccessful candidate. The latest chapter in this saga of goings and comings is the resignation after only six months of Jenny Walker. I was particularly sorry to lose Jenny because of the miserable circumstances brought about by her expressing a view to which others took quite aggressive exception. I believe it is essential that we all respect and defend our councillors freedom to express their views

without fear of recrimination. Councillors with a diverse range of experiences, ideas and views give the council its strength and make council more likely to be a truer representation of the community it serves. The one reality councillors must accept is that they will never satisfy everyone all of the time and also the probability that there will be some that they will never satisfy whatever they do. New councillors must be well informed, principled and measured in their deliberations and in that way prepared for the proper close scrutiny of the public.

Again this year we had a number of planning applications and many concerned residents came to our meetings to express their views. In all cases this input is very helpful to us and we are grateful to the degree of thoughtful detail that is so often presented. As far as I recall in all such cases councillors were able to support residents in their objections or suggested changes to the plans. The same cannot be said for speculative developers who seem to insist on building what they want with an eye to maximising profit with little or no consideration for those neighbours who will be effected. We have become aware of the growing practice of retrospective planning in the guise of amendments. Essentially the building differs from that approved and when found out the enforcement of the agreed plans is found to be ineffective. This lack of authoritative power or will is rewarding developers for flaunting the agreed planning conditions to such an extent that they feel able to do as they please. This cynical flaunting of planning conditions by developers has the unfortunate consequence of hardening our distrust of them and engendering a measure disrespect.

It has become increasingly frustrating when viewing these plans and alterations online because it is not easy to see exactly how the proposed changes differ from the approved plans. The 'track' option is supposed to help users but it does not at present help as much as it might. To do this requires early notification of changes, ready access to before and after drawings and ideally a detailed description. Stephen Hunt, Head of Planning and Development Management, is aware of these shortcoming and has committed to liaising with the software developer to explore future improvements.

Before Christmas we liaised with the police to get the mud cleaned off Pockthorpe Hill when the road condition became hazardous. Procedural clarification was needed and sought and we now understand that it is the police who need to assess the condition of the road and request those responsible to clean up their mess. Some confusion was caused

because when the source of the problem is unknown the police will ask the County Council to return the road to a safe condition.

The Play Area had much of the tired and faded paintwork refreshed by David Tanner and it has recently had its annual ROSPA approved safety check. This past year more of the surrounding metal railings have been damaged by motorists who bump into them causing them to bend. It may be that in time it will be necessary to protect this essential protection of children at play with something more solid.

This year it was agreed to grant an increase of £500 to £3,500 to the Kilham Playing Field Association. The decision was made to cover the cost of mundane but unavoidable overheads of the field. Council has always recognised the huge value and potential of this facility and believe that by helping in this way all the proceeds from fund raising events can be used for the continuing development of the site.

All of the rotten wooden fence posts have been replaced and the entire fence surrounding the pond has been painted. Some rotten soil-retaining boards to the entrance of the village hall have also been replaced.

The biennial StreetScene walkabout in May listed a number of maintenance jobs for the Task Force and other agencies, mostly Highways, to address. As a result some signage has been painted and straightened. Some of the older litter bins have also been painted. Since the serious flooding problems in 2012/2013 the County Drainage Team have been keenly aware of Kilham's vulnerability to flooding. This year they won a funding bid for the considerable amount of work done in Middle Street and Church Street designed to deliver the much needed and very welcome improvement to the drainage of surface water.

There are still some tasks that remain to be done.

A few of the worst potholes in North Back Lane were temporarily filled but the lane remains in a tatty condition. Like Back Lane it too needs resurfacing. At the West End/York Road corner a rotten directional sign is still awaiting a replacement board. The re-digging of 4 grips to alleviate the persistent problem of standing water at the junction of Thwing Road and NBL still remains to be done.

The formerly tidy grass verge near the corner of NBL and Church Lane has been churned up by contractors vehicles during the winter. The recent scattering of grass seed on

unprepared ground has dismayed nearby residents. The builder responsible has been visited by Highways and he is aware that this work needs to be done again but this time to an acceptable standard.

It came to our attention that the smart new footpath around the housing development at the corner of East Street and Burton Road is inaccessible to users of mobility scooters and wheelchairs. The lack of drop kerbs has been brought to the attention of the site manager and the responsible planning officer. We made the point that it should be an embarrassment to those concerned that they appear to not consider equal access provision.

After various enquires we have still not resolved the question of the ownership of the control strip of land in Chantry Meadows.

To get anything done requires the support and cooperation of others. I would like to acknowledge the support and guidance of Claire, our clerk, whose experience and professionalism continues to grow and impress. Council has also benefitted from the wider perspective of our Ward Councillors, Jane and Jonathan who have also, on occasions when our patience has worn thin, proved to be good at rattling cages at County Hall. That said our dealings with the staff at various East Riding of Yorkshire Council departments has convinced me that they really strive to do as much as they can to help. Three years ago we were lucky to find Vince and I'm pleased to note that he has agreed to a further three year contract. He single-handedly cares for our village by keeping the grass trim and by ably doing many various maintenance jobs. I have already mentioned the valuable assistance from residents in our planning application deliberations. My sincere thanks to them all, to my fellow councillors past and present for all that they have done and for all the feedback from the village.

There is ample proof that we live in a caring community and that there is much neighbourly support quietly going on. Long may we all continue to work together with tolerance and understanding, accepting, if not always embracing, the inevitable changes that are ever present whilst still protecting what we value.

Geoff Seward, Chairman, Kilham Parish Council

8th April 2019