

## **Norton Parish Council**

### **Annual Parish meeting 17<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

#### **Chairman's report**

Last year I said that the last 12 months had been a steep learning curve and we expected nothing less. This year can be described as a most frustrating year.

We have spent nearly a year without a clerk and coped pretty well, most of the time. We have recovered/saved over £900 from an over inflated insurance policy and buying the defibrillator rather than leasing it.

I, and I am sure many others, learned a new word 'nullity' referring to the appeal hearing to the enforcement action on the caravan site to the rear of the cottages on Wainlode Hill.

Having turned up expecting to spend two days experiencing a planning appeal, the inspector ended the proceeding after an hour and a quarter, because the documents presented by the Borough Council were not clear enough in their instruction. We believe that the Borough has taken barrister's advice on the outcome of the appeal, but we are unsure of their intentions. I would like to make the point that members of this council suggested that barrister's advice should be sought in a meeting with the planners and others, way back in March 2015. I wish also to record that this has been very stressful to the families bordering this development.

Last year I reported that we influenced the design of a new housing development at Walnut Farm and I quote – 'likely to be a good example of what can be done in rural villages'. That has now been given planning permission, but it took about 14 months.

Then we had the proposed development of 22 houses on Wainlode Lane, using the word Affordability and 'Rural Exception Sites' as an excuse to plant these in our community. Parishioners believe that the infrastructure is not capable of supporting this number of housing. We prepared arguments and circulated these arguments to members of the planning committee, but to no avail. I and others sat through two planning committee meetings listening to the discussion. I am convinced that many members of the committee did not bother to read our submissions and that reaching housing targets was and is more important than meeting the concerns of the community.

In the words of the planning committee chairman 'we pay our officers well, so we should follow their advice, we pay them enough'. A good chairman should thoroughly question the officers' advice; he gets paid more than enough.

I certainly have concerns over the officers' advice given in those meetings. We will come back to this point in agenda item 12 ic, on the agenda.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan is still work in progress, I am afraid. I cannot imagine the number of hours that have gone into this exercise. I took up the challenge to rewrite the document in January, taking into account

the feedback given by the responsible officer at TBC and after further feedback in April, resubmitted a further rewrite on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April. I still await comments on that submission.

We have a new website (since last June). It is being used, even though we publish the address in Norton News, I was asked not so long ago how to access the website, even though it is published in Norton News.

As you are aware we have a new editor of Norton News, Lyda, so I would like to use this opportunity to thank Mary and her able assistant George for their commitment over the years of keeping us abreast of events that takes place in the Parish.

Can I also thank all the people that put in a great deal of effort in organising events etc. for the Parish. If I did list them, you will see the same names appearing time and time again.

So it has been a frustrating year with a few highlights at time I often question the relevance of a Parish Council. I will leave that comment on the table.

Ending on a good note, I heard this evening that our Borough Councillor, Dave Waters, is now leader on the Borough Council. Our best wishes go to Dave for his term in office.

Eirwyn

17<sup>th</sup> May 2017