



# **Annual Parish Meeting**

## **Report by Cllr Gerald Jennings Vice Chair of Harden Parish Council**

I would like to begin my report by thanking our Chair, Cllr Pam Laking, for her contribution to the Parish Council and to Harden.

This year has seen a number of changes in the Council, with Alan Sykes resigning part way through the year, after being with the Parish Council from day one. Many thanks to Alan for his contribution and service and we wish him well for the future.

I joined the Parish Council in August last year and have been Vice Chair since January.

At our February meeting, we co-opted another new member, welcoming Cllr Gerwyn Bryan to the Council.

The Parish Council has had a busy and successful year. We have worked hard to engage with residents, seeking representative views wherever possible. When Bradford Council consulted on proposed new development sites across the district, the Parish Council held a well-attended public meeting to canvass local opinion and prepare a response.

More recently, we held a village engagement event which proved very useful and insightful. We are grateful to Paul Barrett of the Shipley Kirkgate Centre for his input into this work and we have just received a draft report for our consideration. This will help us further appreciate what people care about in Harden and help shape our agenda in the coming year. Thank you to all the residents who engaged with this process and to the school children who also made an active contribution. The report will be made public in due course.

In parallel, we have also started work to refresh the Parish Plan. We have had questionnaires out at various locations in the community and, for the first time, used an online survey. If any residents present have not completed the survey I'd encourage you to visit our website and follow the link.

Talking of the website, we have also made efforts to improve transparency by making greater use of the site to share information, such as our consultation responses. The existing site is a little dated and doesn't offer all the functionality we require. We have therefore conducted a procurement exercise and awarded a contract to Digital Nomads Limited who are currently designing a replacement site. We have high expectations for the new site and will be inviting feedback and suggestions for further features and content.

Other projects in the year have included replacement of the village Christmas Lights and we had a good turnout at the switch-on event in December.

We were pleased to collaborate with Harden WI and replace the dilapidated public bench on Glen View. We have also just purchased picnic benches for the park, with support from the Shipley Community Chest and Area Committee Funding.

We will shortly be installing a community, public access defibrillator or cPAD. Swift access to defibrillation improves cardiac arrest survival rates from less than 3% to over 75% and cPAD's are being installed across the UK in areas like Harden, where ambulance response times are longer than average. The cost of the cPAD is being met by a grant from the Big Lottery Fund. We are also grateful to the Pharmacy for agreeing to allow the unit to be installed on their building.

Throughout the year, we have continued to comment on planning applications received, supporting development that is in keeping with the village and opposing that which is not. Cllr Kay Kirkham is our lead on planning matters and has done a sterling job throughout the year, visiting many sites and leading our discussions.

Looking forwards, the Council is giving consideration to Neighbourhood Planning, a process giving communities power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area.

Work is currently underway on restoration of the War Memorial, partly funded by a successful grant to the War Memorials Trust. We are also investing in horticulture and when planned works are completed in the Post Office beds, along with the memorial restoration and further planting, I think the centre of the village should look fantastic and be very welcoming.

A big issue in the year ahead will be the future of the Memorial Hall. Bradford Council will have no budget to operate the Hall after April 2018 and the Parish Council is looking into various options and giving consideration to the possibility of a community asset transfer.

The Memorial Hall illustrates a trend that is impacting on Local Councils across the district. Austerity means there is less money available for non-essential services and Bradford Council are increasingly looking to either close or transfer assets and to reduce non-essential services.

This presents an opportunity for Parish Councils to try and preserve those services that matter to local people. This is another reason for the Parish Council to engage with residents, to understand where these impacts will be felt locally and where we may be able to make a difference.

It's not possible to describe all activity in a year but I hope I have given a flavour of our work. I am, of course, grateful to other Members for their input and for freely giving their time to support the Council and to contribute to village life.

Gerald Jennings  
11<sup>th</sup> May, 2017