

Harden Parish Council Annual Report

Gerwyn Bryan, Chair

I would like to begin my report by thanking my fellow Councillors for their contribution to the Parish Council and to Harden over the last 12 months.

This year has seen a number of changes in the Council, with both Andy MacDonald and Paul Sullivan joining as new co-opted members, Kay Kirkham taking on the role of Vice Chair and myself taking on the role of Chair. We briefly had Ray Singh as a Councillor before new work commitments meant that he had to stand down after only 3 short months.

The Parish Council has had another busy and successful year. We have worked hard to engage with residents, seeking representative views wherever possible and responding to queries and issues.

We have continued to work on a Neighbourhood Plan in conjunction with refreshing the Parish Plan. A Neighbourhood Plan enables the residents of Harden to help shape the future of the village and influence the wider plans and strategies proposed by Bradford MDC. A Planning Consultant has been appointed and a steering group including interested residents has been formed and has begun to meet regularly to progress the Plan forward. We are very keen on having interested residents working on this alongside the Parish Council and welcome any interested residents. Please do let me or the Council's Clerk know if this is of interest.

We have also begun work on the provision of an Allotment Project within the village and formed an Allotments Working Group to help deliver this exciting project for the village. Whilst residents are represented and we are meeting regularly to try to identify a suitable site, we would welcome help from additional residents, so please get in touch with either myself or the Clerk if you are interested in becoming involved.

The new website www.hardenparishcouncil.gov.uk is now up and running and we have also made efforts to improve transparency by making greater use of the site to share information, such as our consultation responses. We are happy to receive information for posting on the website to help us keep everyone in the village as informed as possible.

Other projects in the year have included completion of the replanting of the village flower beds and the area around the War Memorial, alongside completing repairs to the War Memorial itself and the stonework. Remembrance Day and the weather delayed Christmas Lights switch on were once again well attended and our thanks go to St Saviours for their help at both.

A special thanks to Co. Kay Kirkham for her work on the Harden online archive of the Harden at War project and to Digital Nomads. The Lord Mayor attended a presentation of the completion of this work in November 2018 and was greatly impressed.

Refurbishment continues on the former BT telephone kiosk on the corner of Long Lane and Keighley Road. As the weather improves we will be repairing and repainting the kiosk to maintain its iconic status and style, before its new use as a village information point and book exchange.

Further works have included speed bump reprofiling after resident representation to the parish Council and in addition 2 extra grit bins have been provided in the centre of the village.

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, once more, done a sterling job throughout the year, visiting many sites and leading our discussions.

In particular Councillors have been particularly active this year in persuading the developers of the residential site at Keighley Road to reinstate the s.106 payments that accompanied the eventual grant of planning permission resulting in payments to the community of c.£150,000. A terrific result for the village.

A big issue last year was the future of the Memorial Hall. Harden Pre-School has been successful in taking on the Hall through an asset transfer and the Parish Council look forward to continuing to support them in their endeavours to maintain it as a community facility, alongside the successful Pre-School.

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 is increasingly looking to either close or transfer assets and to reduce nonessential 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.

Harden Parish Council are continuing to monitor those assets where we feel an asset transfer may be appropriate.

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.

Following the recent Parish Council Elections I'd like to congratulate those elected to take office from May 2019 and confirm that we currently have one vacancy for Harden Parish Council.

Gerwyn Bryan

Chair - Harden Parish Council

gerwyn.bryan@hardenparishcouncil.gov.uk