

Harden Village Council Annual Report – 2022

Gerwyn Bryan, Chair

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

The last year has seen significant changes within the council saying goodbye to Cllr Paul Sullivan following his election to Bradford Metropolitan District Council for Bingley Rural, Ann Taylor after a number of years of service and Robert Hawthorne. We welcomed Amy Wood, Alun Kitsell and Joe McShera to the Council.

The Village Council has had another busy and successful year, operating both through on-line meetings and latterly being able to meet again face to face. We have worked hard to engage with residents, seeking representative views wherever possible and responding to queries and issues. Ongoing projects include the following: -

Hardens Neighbourhood Plan

After a number of years of significant progress and consultation, Hardens Neighbourhood Plan is now lodged with the Council. This is a valuable document which will help to shape the future of the village and influence the wider plans and strategies proposed by Bradford MDC.

War Memorial Renovation

The ongoing renovation of the War Memorial has now completed.

Benches Replacement

Replacement of 4 new benches at various locations throughout the village has now completed.

Village Boundary Signs

The project to enhance boundary and village centre signage at the 5 entry points to the village has now completed.

Telephone Kiosk

The refurbishment of the village telephone box as a village information point has gathered momentum. Repainting the kiosk in it's iconic red colour and replacement of glazing has completed with the internal fit out underway.

Christmas Lights

Additional funding has been allocated for enhanced lighting next Christmas.

Ongoing projects with which the Village Council are actively pursuing include the following: -

Bingley Rural Green Travel Project

Initiated by Cllr Jools Townsend, the project has successfully brought together the Village and Parish Councils of Harden, Cullingworth, Denholme and Wilsden to work together. Its aims are to get people thinking, talking and airing their views on how we can make our local transport and travel more sustainable. Various roadshows and workshops have taken place and the emphasis on green travel continues.

Traffic & Transport

One of the key points raised as part of our consultation exercises has been the concern of residents to both the volume and speed of traffic through the village. In November 2019 we commissioned a Traffic survey of the village to establish facts in order to lay the foundation for any changes. The results of that survey have been discussed with Bradford MDC who are now commissioning additional surveys. We will then work towards a variety of speed reduction measures through the village. My thanks go to Cllr Jools Townsend for her valuable work in this direction.

Allotments

We have reinstated 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, which was held back by the constraints of lock down. Whilst residents were previously represented, we are currently trying to identify a suitable site and would welcome help from additional residents, so please get in touch with either Cllr Alun Kitsell or the Clerk if you are interested in becoming involved.

Climate Emergency

In October 2019, The Village Council became one of the first rural communities to declare a Climate Emergency and produced a Climate Emergency Plan for 2020-21 with a broad commitment to put the Emergency at the forefront of discussions and decision making.

We are embracing this declaration within our actions as a Council on a number of projects currently being led by Cllr Amy Wood, including the recent community litter pick with the recently formed Harden & Wilsden Green Action Group.

Planning

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.

Emergency Plan

Cllr Falak Ahmed and Cllr Joe McShera are leading a project to develop an Emergency Plan for Harden and this should complete in the coming months. This will help the local team and Emergency Services to be able to react to any major incident within the village should it be forthcoming, particularly relevant in light of recent flooding.

And finally....

As we emerge from the effects of lockdown and COVID-19 becomes more controllable it looks like the squeeze on local public finances will continue. This means that there is less money available for non-essential services and Bradford Council is increasingly looking to either close or transfer assets and to reduce non-essential services.

As I mentioned in my last report of 2021, this presents an opportunity for Parish & Village Councils to try and preserve those services that matter to local people. This is another reason for the Village 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 Village Council are continuing to monitor those assets where we feel an asset transfer may be appropriate and in addition will make appropriate applications to preserve Assets of Community Value where we feel there is a danger that they may be lost to the village.

It's not possible to describe all activity over what has been a particularly busy and testing time for all, but I hope I have given a flavour of our work. I am, of course, grateful to our Clerk, Ken Eastwood and all Councillor's for their input and for freely giving their time to support the Council and to contribute to village life.

Harden Village Council Members

Cllr Gerwyn Bryan - Chair

Cllr Kay Kirkham - Vice Chair and Member for Planning & The Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Jools Townend - Member for Climate Change, Traffic & Transport

Cllr Falak Ahmed - Member for Emergency Planning

Cllr Amy Wood - Member for Climate Emergency

Cllr Joe McShera - Member for Emergency Planning

Cllr Alun Kitsell - Member for Allotments Project